









The Arrival.

Flora Morris' Choice.

Frontispiece.

See P. 31.

FLORA MORRIS' CHOICE;

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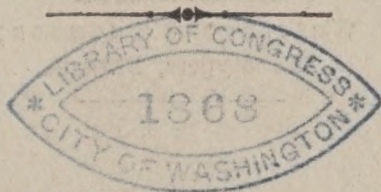
"BE NOT CONFORMED TO THE WORLD."

BY

MRS. MARY J. HILDEBURN,

AUTHOR OF

"MONEY," "FAR AWAY," "BESSIE LANE'S MISTAKE," ETC.



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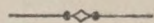
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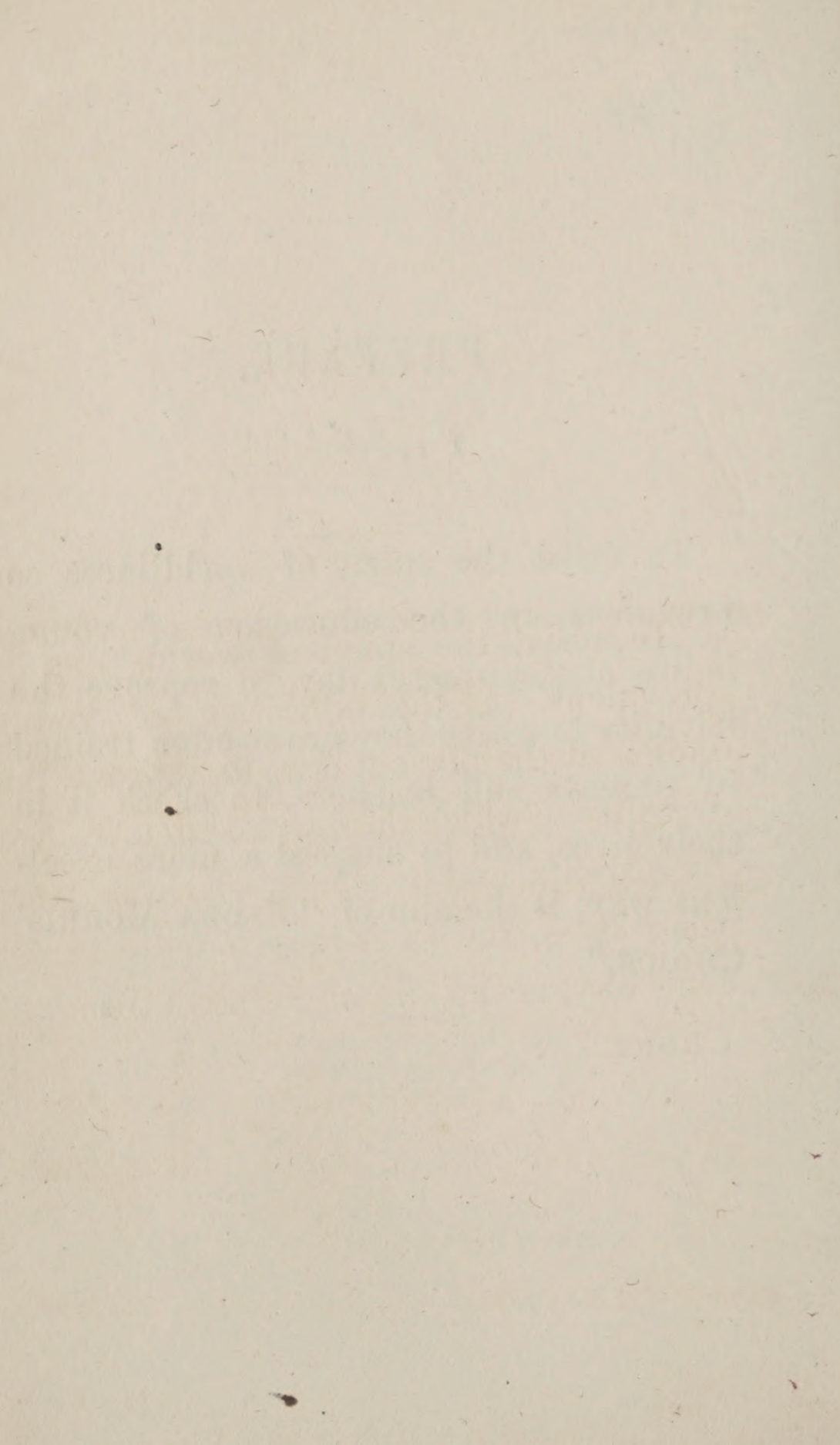
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PREFACE.



To resist the spirit of worldliness so prevalent in the education of young ladies at the present day, to reprove the frivolity to which they are so often trained by parents and teachers, to check it in their lives, and to suggest a more excellent way, is the aim of "FLORA MORRIS' CHOICE."



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FLORA MORRIS' CHOICE.

CHAPTER I.

MR. AND MRS. WILLIAM MORRIS.

R. MORRIS was seated in the breakfast-room, apparently occupied with the contents of the morning's paper; but his brow was clouded and his lips compressed by other troubles than any that could be suggested by the "Latest news from Europe," upon which his eyes now rested, and which he had already carefully perused and thoroughly digested upon the previous evening. Mrs. Morris' hands were employed in vigorously dusting the mantel ornaments with a brilliantly-colored feather brush. Her countenance, too, bore signs of a mind disturbed by more important matters than dust upon china, annoying as this must always be to all good housekeepers. The lady was the first to break the silence :

“Mr. Morris!”

“Well?”

The short response might have been intended merely as an invitation for her to proceed with the conversation, but to the quick ear of his wife it implied much more than this. She understood the peculiar tone in which it was uttered to mean: “You have already taxed my patience to a very great extent, and, I perceive, intend to try it still further; but I am a martyr, and as such am bound to endure any amount of persecution.” The invitation to pursue the conversation was not very graciously extended, but the lady had a point to gain, and might lose it by waiting for a more favorable opportunity.

“It is utterly impossible,” she said, “for us to remain in town all summer, and country boarding at a farm-house is too hateful to be thought of for a moment.”

“Well, what do you propose?”

The tone was quite as discouraging as ever, but the lady was presevering, and proceeded:

“Many of our friends are going to Europe, and they say it costs no more to live there than to pay board at fashionable watering-places at home.”

"I thought I had told you already, Maria, that I could not afford to pay the expenses of the family at a fashionable watering-place," returned her husband quickly.

"*Less*, I ought to have said," replied Mrs. Morris, correcting herself—"far less, Mrs. Meredith tells me. Why, she says that one can live in Italy and in many pleasant little towns in the German states for a mere song."

"This is all nonsense, Maria," Mr. Morris answered, impatiently. "In the first place, the song you talk about is one that you, at least, do not know *how* to sing. If one chooses to live on macaroni or lager beer and sausage, it may be done cheaply in Italy or Germany, I have no doubt; and if you fancy this style of living for yourself, you might try it at home quite as successfully as abroad. Rather more so, I should say, when one considers the expense of crossing and recrossing the ocean, at the rate of three hundred dollars in gold for each person. But even if it were just as your friend estimates it, Europe is quite out of the question for us at present. My business affairs require almost constant attention. A protracted absence might be ruinous to us all;

and I must be near enough to the city to be able to return at a short notice."

Mrs. Morris was not endowed with any considerable amount of wisdom, but she had sufficient to appreciate this objection. Success in business meant to her not the necessities of life alone, but also its luxuries, which were very important in her estimation. But Europe was not the only plan which she had to propose. There was another—a last resource, and only adopted after considerable misgivings—in case of the failure of the first. The silence therefore was again broken after a few moments.

"I was thinking yesterday of your brother George," she said. Mr. Morris had resumed his paper, but now it was laid down hastily.

"Well?" he responded once more; but this time the monosyllable conveyed a different meaning from what it had done the first time it was uttered. There was less of the martyr spirit about it, and very much more of mere human surprise and curiosity.

"He has a pleasant farm about a hundred miles or so from the city," Mrs. Morris continued, hesitatingly.

“Certainly he has,” replied her husband; “but you surely do not mean to accept of one of his many invitations at this late day, and after such frequent protestations against passing the season at a farm-house.”

“No, not for myself,” she answered, “but for the children. I dare say your brother and his family would be glad to have them, and then, you see, this would reduce our expenses very considerably. You and I could take our summer’s trip at less than half the customary cost; not to mention the difference in the amount of trouble to you. So much less baggage to see after! Then the girls are so apt to be slow in their movements that it is hard to get good seats for them in the crowded cars. And Willie is worse than the girls, if possible—frightening us out of our senses for fear that he may get under the locomotive, in his zeal to find out the name of the maker, and to see how this one differs from the last that he saw. You remember last summer how we missed him at Albany, and, after a search, found him on the down train, just as it was about starting for the city. Then, too, at all the different places where we stayed, what a perpetual torment he was!

Children are said to be much better off at some quiet farm-house for the summer, and I am inclined to believe it. At Saratoga he made himself sick drinking so many tumblers of Washington Spring water for a wager, besides going off with some boys in a boat, which was nearly upset while we were drinking lemonade on the piazza of the Lake House. It was worse, if anything, at Newport, for there he made acquaintance with the hostler, and was scarcely ever out of the stables—learning to use all sorts of improper language, besides running the risk of being kicked to death by vicious horses. Anxiety for him really undoes all the good effects one ought to obtain from such places. Last summer I actually returned home thinner than I was at starting. *Boys* are certainly better off at a farm-house—and girls, too, for that matter.”

Mrs. Morris had commenced her speech hesitatingly, but, gaining courage as she proceeded, grew quite eloquent, and at last ended with a decision of manner which formed a striking contrast to the first feeble utterance. Her husband had listened to her in the beginning with doubt and surprise. She had always objected so strenuously to having

any further intercourse with his brother's family than was absolutely necessary, that he could scarcely believe her now to be in earnest; and, after the conviction forced itself upon him, he could still see a number of objections. Her eloquent reasoning did not fail in its effect upon him; and yet, after all, it required no very great argumentative power to convince him of the advantage of traveling with a smaller and less troublesome party. Then, too, although he was slow to admit it, he was quite as fond in his way of the excitement of fashionable resorts as his wife could be, and quite as averse to abandoning them, even for one season. Added to this, there was a better feeling at work in his heart, inclining him to regard the suggestion favorably—love for his only brother, and a desire to have the acquaintance kept up between the two families. But a certain sort of respect for first impressions required that he should make a faint show of opposition.

“But, Maria,” he suggested, “it hardly seems fair to turn Willie off upon others when he is so troublesome to us. I question whether it is right for a man to throw his legitimate burden upon

his neighbor's shoulders because he finds it too heavy for his own."

"I think, my dear Mr. Morris," replied his wife, "that you scarcely understand the matter. There is a wide difference between a farm in the heart of the country and Newport or Saratoga. Willie might run wild all over a farm from morning till night without getting into the least mischief or danger, while he would scarcely be able to turn at a watering-place without harming himself or somebody else. Then, too, we need not be at the expense of new clothes for him, and it will not matter much about his tearing the old ones."

"Still, it seems hardly fair," demurred Mr. Morris, "to sponge upon our friends for the children's boarding all summer."

"Why, Mr. Morris!" exclaimed his wife, "how strangely you are reasoning this morning! If I did not see you, I should think it was some other person who was speaking. For the last four or five years you have been urging that we should make a visit to your brother's house, and now that I suggest it you are raising objections."

"Yes, I know," he said; "but this seems dif-

ferent from an ordinary visit; it looks like merely making a convenience of our relations to serve our own ends."

"Not in the least," she replied; "it is only your way of looking at it; and I am sure your brother would never be guilty of such an idea. You know you could take the children there yourself; and it would be so pleasant for both of you to spend a few days together after so long a separation. You would have so much to say to each other. It is so delightful to recall old times and old friends. Why, I should think you would be glad of the opportunity, instead of raising trifling objections."

The picture certainly looked very attractive, not only as presented by his wife, but with the additional coloring which his own ready imagination had laid upon it. Then, too, it occurred to him that he might make such sensible and useful presents to his brother's family as would serve, if not to cancel the obligation, at least to show a proper appreciation of it. But upon this last suggestion he concluded not to consult his wife, preferring rather to carry it out according to his own peculiar notions.

So the matter was finally settled. Mr. Morris was to write to his brother, and Mrs. Morris to her sister-in-law; and it was thought best not to mention the projected visit to the young people themselves until the receipt of the answers.



CHAPTER II.

THE MISSES AND MASTER MORRIS.

THE answers came in due time; both were favorable, as had been expected, and now Mrs. Morris had other difficulties to overcome—the objections of her daughters themselves. With Willie none were anticipated, for a farm life would exactly suit his tastes, which just then lay in a decidedly agricultural line. But the young ladies, of sixteen and eighteen, had very different ideas. They had accompanied their parents for the last few years to all the various places of fashionable resort, and had already acquired a fancy for the sort of life led in such places. They had danced night after night through the hot summer in crowded saloons, exposed to the careless gaze of a host of idle lookers-on, and enjoyed it, after a fashion, amazingly. To be sure, they arose to a late breakfast in the morning, sometimes with a

headache, and always feeling tired and stupid; but by evening all was right again, and they were able to join in the dance with as much zest as ever. The lessons learned amid such scenes were gained with a facility that was surprising, when compared with the slowness which they displayed in the acquisition of their school studies. But these lessons were of a different description, and their teachings far more in accordance with the natural tendencies of the human heart. Young as they were, they were able to enter a crowded room with perfect self-possession, and walk its entire length with an air of quiet unconcern, although conscious that a hundred or more eyes might be watching their progress. At a public table they could give orders to the waiter in the most peremptory manner, and monopolize his attentions exactly as if they had sole proprietorship in him, and entirely regardless of the fact that others had an equal right to his services with themselves. They had learned to imitate all the airs and graces of the fashionable women of the world, with a correctness that rendered them simply ridiculous in the eyes of the observant. Their mother was well aware of this, and for a

time had encouraged it, under the impression that it would be favorable to their advancement in life; but of late she had begun to doubt its advantages, even from a worldly point of view. She was sincere, then, when she spoke of their being better off at a farm-house, imagining that there might be a double benefit derived from it—in freshening the roses upon their cheeks, in toning down their manners, and removing some of the artificial gloss. She knew, however, that the young ladies themselves would not concur in this opinion, and would have as strong an antipathy to a farm life as their parents; but Mrs. Morris was of a diplomatic turn, and had no objection to meeting opposition when certain of holding in her hand the power by which to overcome it in the end.

She accordingly chose an early opportunity of informing her children of the change in the plans for the summer, so far as they were personally concerned. Master Willie swung his cap for joy, and started off immediately to impart the good news to his companions, hoping to excite their envy by it. Blanche, the eldest daughter, expressed her objections in the most open and de-

cided manner, declaring that she should die of *ennui* long before the two months were ended; and Flora announced, quite as decidedly, her intention of staying at home and shutting herself up in the attic, as a far preferable mode of passing the summer to that which was proposed. But their mother could be firmer and more decided than they were. Blanche must run the risk of dying, and Flora could not be allowed the refuge of the attic, as the servants were to be dismissed and the house closed. Very reluctantly the young ladies found themselves obliged to submit to their fate, which they did rather ungracefully. Blanche, with far more regard for appearances than truth, when questioned as to their prospects for the season, vaguely informed her acquaintances that her father was to take her to meet some friends with whom she was to travel, but the route would not be fixed upon until they had consulted together. Flora was far less communicative upon the subject, merely saying that she was to be taken somewhere by her father, which somewhere meant a place which he had chosen, and not what she would have selected for herself.

There is a pleasant excitement to most persons

in the process of packing, and in making the other necessary arrangements for leaving home; and in spite of their ill-humor our young friends yielded to this influence and grew interested.

“It is scarcely worth while to take any but our very plainest clothes,” said Blanche with a sigh, as she cast her eye over a row of dresses hanging in her wardrobe.

“Unless you would like to set the fashions for our benighted country cousins,” suggested Flora.

“I should never care to wear a dress again,” responded Blanche, “after having once seen an awkward copy of it upon some gawky country girl. But, Flora,” she inquired, “do tell me how many of these horrible cousins there are? You must know, for I heard papa telling you about them last evening.”

“Let me see,” mused Flora: “there is only one daughter, about my age, papa thinks, and two sons, older. All horribly countrified, I dare say.”

“Really! only three?” exclaimed Blanche. “That is quite moderate, under the circumstances. I was afraid we would find at least a dozen, for as a general thing poor people have such very large families. For my part, I shall take an

extra quantity of light reading with me to pass away the time, as I have no expectation of finding entertainment from the household."

"Wouldn't it be just as well to take a few grammars and a copy or two of Chesterfield?" suggested Flora. "But pray do not look so black, Blanche," she added quickly, seeing an ominous cloud upon her sister's face; "I meant them for the benefit of our country friends, and not for your own use."

"You can attend to that business yourself," returned Blanche. "I shall take a silver fork and spoon, and a few napkins; for if they choose to eat like barbarians, I do not."

"Oh, never mind, Blanche!" replied Flora good-humoredly; "it may not be so very bad, after all. I suppose we shall manage to get along somehow. They will have pic-nics, quilting parties, and such things, which will amuse us, I dare say."

"I could never be amused at a horrible country pic-nic," said Blanche. "My tastes do not lie in the line of caterpillars and snakes, nor yet of dining under a tree that is constantly dropping

black ants and dead leaves; and as to quilting parties, they are decidedly vulgar."

"You need not look so disgusted," returned Flora. "There is Mrs. Axminster, a leader of fashion, and the very pink of refinement, who spent four weeks camping out among the Adirondacks. I am certain, if you could have heard her description of the wild sort of life that she and her party led there, it would have shocked you dreadfully. Although, to be sure, one can excuse such doings much more readily when they are merely indulged in for amusement by a person of Mrs. Axminster's social position, than when it is one's country cousins, who are vulgar and do not know any better."

Blanche looked up hastily. Her perception was not remarkably keen, but she had an idea that she was being ridiculed, for Flora could be very sarcastic on occasions. But the countenance which met her gaze was very sober in its expression, and left her still in doubt.

"Well, really, Flora," she said, "I hope you are not meaning to defend vulgarity."

"Oh dear! no!" returned Flora carelessly;

"I was only mentioning a singular fact concerning it."

The announcement of a visitor waiting to see them here ended the discussion for the present.



CHAPTER III.

THE JOURNEY AND ITS END.

THE morning fixed upon by the Morrisises for their departure was cloudy and damp, which circumstance tended to heighten the ill-humor of Blanche.

Flora was gifted with a love of adventure, which, after the first burst of disappointment had subsided, began to exert a happy influence on her feelings. She was not satisfied with the arrangement; but it had been made without consulting her, and now that all was settled, the wisest course seemed to be to make the best of it. Willie had been looking forward to the visit with delightful anticipations, and when they reached the depot, moved about hither and thither happy, excited and busy. He had fishing-rods of various sizes and descriptions, about the safety of which he was deeply interested, and a large wooden box, containing a beautiful miniature

boat. Over the latter article he held a fierce discussion with the conductor while his father was attending to the trunks, the conductor insisting upon the said box being considered as baggage and transferred to the burden car, and Master Willie strenuously opposing such a movement, and persisting in his intention of taking it into the passenger car. The difficulty was brought to a premature end by an employé of the road suddenly seizing the object of dispute, carrying it off, and placing it with the trunks. The man had been listening to the fray from the first with a comical expression of face, and had only waited for a fitting opportunity to bring it to a close. Master Willie was making ineffectual attempts to rescue it when he, in his turn, found himself summarily taken in charge by his father and seated in the car, where he was obliged to follow the example of his sister Flora and try to make the best of a disappointment.

The train moved off, a few drops of rain fell, and for a time the landscape was obscured by the clouds. Presently these divided, exhibiting here and there traces of the beautiful blue ether. Then, very soon after, the sun shone out, present-

ing a fine view of the country through which they were passing. Blanche had complained bitterly of the weather when they started, yet now that it was clear, she scarcely looked out of the window to observe the scenery, but fixed her attention upon a foolish novel, whose pages proved more attractive to her just then than anything else. Flora, on the contrary, who was an admirer of nature, was very observant, and quite enthusiastic in her expressions of admiration.

They were obliged to leave the cars after a few hours' ride and take a steamer, which would bring them within a few miles of their place of destination. Here Blanche seated herself upon a rocking-chair in the cabin and resumed her book, while Flora stayed with her father and brother upon deck, in full enjoyment of the sail. It ended too quickly for Flora, and she saw the usual preparations being made for landing with regret.

They were to be met by some member of their uncle's family at the wharf, and both girls looked around with great anxiety to observe the appearance of the person and the vehicle. But they had no power of divining which of the motley

crowd of horses and men waited for them; and their curiosity must remain ungratified for a while, as their father instructed them to remain quietly on the boat until he should look after their baggage. Willie was already on the forward deck, carrying his fishing-rods and keeping guard over his treasure.

“Oh, dear! It is too bad to be sent so entirely out of the world!” moaned Blanche. The approach towards the end of the journey had turned her attention away from her novel, and renewed her apprehensions.

“I should like to leap over the next two months, and find myself safely back among the civilized,” said Flora, with an air of desperation. For, now that the reality was so near, Flora’s fears, which had been laid aside so persistently, began to revive.

The two sisters stood disconsolately leaning over the side of the boat, when their father approached.

“Come, girls,” he said; “everything is arranged now. The trunks are all right; I have seen your cousin, and he is waiting for you.”

Very reluctantly they followed, while he pi-

loted the way safely through the crowd upon the boat and wharf until they had reached a clear space, where, with a large, old-fashioned carriage, drawn by sombre-looking horses, stood a tall, robust young man, whom their father introduced as their cousin, John Morris. He was respectably dressed in a suit of gray; but his large, sun-burnt hands were ungloved, and felt hard and rough to the touch, as he grasped them in friendly greeting. His face, too, was bronzed by constant exposure to the sun and wind, and his appearance, although certainly not boorish, was still very different from that of their usual associates. One quick glance was sufficient to impress this fact upon their minds, and they looked forward with uneasy misgivings as to what the future might reveal to them. Willie perceived nothing amiss in his cousin John, who in his estimation was little less than a hero, possessing a key to all the mysteries of farming, and well endowed with a variety of accomplishments. The girls were on the back seat of the carriage, their father opposite, with Willie's fishing-rods beside him; while Master Willie, himself, was stationed in front, in full possession of his precious box.

The trunks had been left to be brought on in the stage, as there happened to be but few passengers this afternoon.

Mr. Morris and Willie asked a great many questions, which John Morris answered; but he spoke in a low tone, and the girls gained but little information, as they could only catch a word or two now and then. The country looked beautifully green, with that freshness of coloring which one sometimes finds in the neighborhood of the sea, and the air was pure and invigorating, springing from the same healthful locality. After a rapid drive of an hour or more they entered the main street of a village. It was very wide, almost covered with grass, and bordered upon each side by fine shade trees. The houses were plain, and generally unpainted, but they were sparsely built, and the gardens in front and the intervening spaces were verdant and well cultivated, as if it were intended that nature should make amends for the deficiencies in art.

Blanche and Flora looked at the small, unpretending dwellings, and, fancying that the inhabitants of such places must be rough and uncouth and not fit associates for themselves, imagined

that all their fears were about being consummated. Here and there they espied a more modern and tasteful structure, and there were one or two of the older buildings, half hidden by large shade trees, and with a lawn and broad carriage way, which seemed to give promise of more stylish residents; but still there was not enough in these to inspire sufficient hope to remove the disagreeable impressions with which they had been haunted. The church, too, was picturesque and pretty, being decidedly in advance of the houses in its style of architecture; but a church was of secondary importance in their estimation, and they scarcely deigned to look at it.

Willie's attention had been attracted by two large windmills, and he was in a state of perfect ecstasy. Here was an unexpected object of entertainment, and he felt that his bright anticipations would be more than realized. His cousin was overwhelmed with inquiries. Were these mills often used? Were the millers clever fellows, who would let a boy go in and see them now and then? What was the meaning of that pole with the empty basket perched upon it? And a variety of similar questions, all of which

were answered in the same low, quiet tone. Very interesting these answers must have proved to the questioner, if one might judge from the intensity with which he listened; and satisfactory, too, from the bright manner with which they were received.

The carriage drove on through the whole length of the street. The sunlight, filtered through the branches of the trees, fell in beautiful streaks and patches upon the smooth, green sward beneath; a drove of cows were going home to be milked, and a flock of geese, almost dazzling in their whiteness, moved slowly and solemnly along, with a stateliness of manner that was quite ludicrous.

“Blank! Blank!” called out Willie. “Just look at those geese! There’s pride and dignity for you. Those fellows must belong to the highest aristocracy here, I should think, by the way they are strutting. Now, do you think it would be possible for you to come up to that?”

“I wish you would try to talk more sensibly,” replied his sister, with a ruffled countenance.

Blanche was very angry, and would have said much more had not a regard for decorum pre-

vented. Her brother had offended her purposely, not only by the tone of his remarks, but by calling her "Blank," which he knew to be objectionable to her.

Nature had once more regained its soothing influence over Flora. She had nearly forgotten her troubles in the beauty of the scene, but unfortunately Willie's rude remark and her sister's impatient reproof aroused her from more pleasing reflections.

They left the main road, turned into a retired lane, and presently drew up before a long, low, irregular building, having a short walk leading to the door, bordered by flowers, with shade trees upon either side. There was an evident disregard of all the rules of architecture in the construction of the house, additions having been put up of the shape and size that would best suit the requirements of the family, and without much attention to taste. The boards, however, were painted, the windows were shuttered, and there was an air of neatness observable in the house and its surroundings. Still, the girls had never entered so humble a tenement on the terms of visitor, and now in their foolish pride they shrank

back from doing so. On a former occasion we mentioned Mr. Morris as indulging in the spirit of a martyr; his daughters just now were experiencing similar sensations. Nerving themselves to endure the fate allotted to them, they very reluctantly prepared to leave the carriage. The house had at first arrested their attention to the exclusion of other objects, but now they were conscious of the presence of three persons waiting to receive them—an elderly couple and a young girl. They were all neatly dressed, yet in a style that appeared obsolete in the eyes of our fashionable young women of the world. They had barely time to observe this, when they found themselves receiving a warm greeting, and returning it with about as much politeness as they were able to muster to their help under the circumstances.

“Will you go immediately to your room, girls, or would you prefer to rest here for a while?” inquired Mrs. Morris.

Blanche murmured something about wishing to rid herself of the dust of travel. Their cousin led the way to the apartment prepared for them, where she paused for a moment, and offered to

assist them, but they refused the offer and she withdrew.

"Oh dear! Flora," exclaimed Blanche, as soon as they were alone, "what shall we do? It will kill us both to stay here two whole months."

"I caught a glimpse of a pond a short distance down the road," replied Flora, in a tone of desperation, "and I think I shall seize the first opportunity and drown myself."

Blanche opened her eyes wide in amazement.

"You needn't look so astonished, Blanche," she continued; "it would be far preferable to the lingering death you talk about, besides being decidedly more romantic."

She spoke earnestly, in the coolest possible manner, and with a serious expression of countenance.

Blanche rarely understood a joke, and now she was greatly puzzled. She waited, silently deliberating what answer she should make to this strange tirade; but Flora neither expected nor desired one. She glanced around the room and then went on talking rapidly:

"Did you ever see such a queer wooden mantel? and how in the world can any one be ex-

pected to breathe beneath such a low ceiling? I shall imagine that I am in a similar condition to the poor prisoner who was doomed to see the walls of his cell contract, day after day, until he was smothered to death between them. Then look, too, at this bedstead, made by one of Noah's carpenters, I dare say; and the chairs and the washstand all bear marks of the same ancient individual's workmanship."

Blanche was still silent, but her countenance was sufficiently expressive of disgust without the need of words. She moved slowly about, divesting herself of hat and mantilla, and removing the various articles for toilet use from her small traveling bag. Then she turned to arrange her hair.

"Such a mean looking-glass!" she muttered.

The reflection of a soiled, flushed and discontented face was not a very pleasing picture, but Blanche need not have held the glass responsible for it.

"Oh! as to the toilet-glass," said Flora, "I do not see that it is any worse than those we found when we were traveling last summer."

"But then, you must remember, Flora, that

this is a private house, and the people are your near relations," replied Blanche.

"Dear me, Blanche," retorted her sister, "there is no need for you to get into a passion with me about it. The people are your relations as much as mine."

"I know it, to my sorrow," Blanche answered; "and I cannot imagine how papa ever could have such a vulgar brother."

"That is the misfortune; the fault is in acknowledging them, and making us the sufferers," said Flora, with emphasis.

"I do not intend——"

But the intentions of Blanche were destined to remain unannounced, for the sound of men's feet indicated that the trunks were being brought up, and warned her to silence. The men proved to be their uncle and cousin, who, after inquiring which part of the room would be most convenient for the trunks, placed them in the spots designated, unstrapped them, and left the girls once more to the free indulgence of their ill-natured remarks.

"Well, Blanche," inquired Flora, taking immediate advantage of the opportunity, "will you

tell our city friends that our uncle and cousin act as porters to their visitors?"

Her sister returned answer, not verbally, but with one of her most expressive grimaces; but now the tea-bell rang, and forced her out of her usual indolence into hurriedly finishing her toilet.

At the foot of the stairs the sisters found their cousin waiting to conduct them to the tea-room.

Uncertain as to how her father would regard any such proceedings, Blanche had concluded not to produce her napkin and silver during his stay, and a glance at the well-arranged table was sufficient to convince her that this omission would not occasion any disagreeable consequences. There was a full supply of both articles; although perhaps the damask might be a degree or two coarser than that to which she was accustomed. The fare was good and bountiful; but there was no servant, and the family waited on themselves, which proved another source of annoyance to their sensitive visitors.

Now for the first time Blanche and Flora found opportunity to examine more closely the personal appearance of their relatives. Mr. George Morris was quite tall, straight, and slender in

figure, and had a decidedly handsome face, although very much bronzed by constant exposure to the weather. His wife was of medium size, and only remarkable for a very fine pair of eyes and an unusually bright and intelligent countenance. Their daughter Lucy seemed to have inherited the best traits from each of her parents. Her features were, like her father's, almost perfect in their regularity, and her eyes were her mother's, although somewhat softer in expression. Lucy was certainly very pretty, yet as this truth forced itself upon Blanche, she modified it with the inward comment, "Very much tanned and decidedly countrified." John, the eldest son, and only remaining member of the family present, had already been introduced to the notice of his cousins.

The meal passed quite comfortably, the taciturnity of the young ladies being lost sight of in the loquacity of their father, who had very many questions to ask and answer. After tea the time progressed rather slowly. Mrs. Morris seemed to have engagements in another part of the house that demanded her attention, and Lucy's attempts at conversation being but faintly responded to,

soon ceased almost entirely. John Morris, appearing to identify himself with his father and uncle, had joined them, and his low tones were occasionally heard, as if he was doing his part towards the general entertainment.

Presently, however, their aunt returned, carrying a lighted lamp, which she placed in the sitting-room upon one side of the hall. Upon seeing this their uncle arose, and instantly John and Lucy did the same, while the visitors intuitively followed their example.

“I hope, William, that you and your daughters will join us in our evening worship,” said Mr. George Morris.

His brother assented quickly, yet with the embarrassed air of one who consents blindly to do what he does not understand.

The party adjourned to the sitting-room, where they were joined by a respectable-looking man and woman, who said, “How do you do?” upon entering, and were introduced as David and Jemima Carson. Hymn-books were distributed, and then the exercises were commenced by Mr. George Morris reading the hymn—

“How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer’s ears!”

John raised the tune, and the whole family joined in the singing. His father then read a chapter from the gospel of Luke, and after this offered a prayer. While these services were going on, Blanche and Flora were in a state of complete bewilderment. It was not only the first time that they had attended family worship, but also the first time they had heard a prayer uttered except from the pulpit. When the exercises were concluded, their consternation and awkwardness had increased to such a degree that their aunt observed it, and, not understanding its cause, and supposing them to be sleepy and tired, proposed their retiring for the night. They gladly assented to this, and she lighted a lamp and went with them to their chamber. Here she remained for a few moments, and with motherly kindness arranged the windows and curtains, took a general survey of the apartment, and inquired if they needed anything. Then, kissing them each affectionately, she bade them good-night, and turned to go; but suddenly remembering that she had forgotten something, she said:

"We are what you may regard as very early risers. The first bell will ring at six o'clock; the second one at quarter before seven for prayers; and then we have breakfast immediately after prayers are over."

The girls listened to her with constrained politeness, but as soon as she was safely out of hearing Flora burst into a fit of suppressed laughter.

"O Blanche," she cried, "did you ever know anything so queer? Why this is equal to the best that Barnum could produce. A regular Museum. Then to think of papa having a brother who is a Methodist, or Puritan, or whatever you may please to call him!"

Here Flora indulged in another fit of laughter. But Blanche, who was not so excitable as her sister, could see nothing amusing in the ordeal through which she was passing.

"I cannot stay here; I shall go home with papa," she said. "Mamma would never oblige me to stay if she knew that we were expected to attend Methodist prayer meeting twice in the day. Besides, it is utterly impossible for me to get up at six o'clock in the morning."

“I think you will have to try it,” replied Flora, restraining her laughter—“while papa is here, at any rate; and then, you know, if we go to bed at half-past eight, as we are doing now, it will give us a good, long night. We can sing the old nursery rhyme:

‘Early to bed, and early to rise,
Will make a man healthy, wealthy and wise.’

How wealthy and wise do you think we shall be by the end of the summer season, Blanche?”

But Blanche was indulging in one of her silent spells, and would not answer.



CHAPTER IV.

BRIGHTON—ITS CUSTOMS AND MANNERS.

NOT long after day-break on the following morning Flora was awakened by the singing of birds.

“O Blanche,” she exclaimed, “did you ever hear such delightful music? This is better than any matinee that I ever attended.”

“Who wants a matinee at this time in the morning? It is a perfectly heathenish infliction,” muttered Blanche.

“I dare say the birds consider it quite civilized,” returned Flora.

“Well, then, I do not,” repeated Blanche; “they have no right to awaken people at this time in the morning.”

“Dear me, Blanche,” replied Flora, “it is hardly worth while to blame the birds. I suppose the poor things hear so much said about this being

a free country that they think they have a right to sing when they please."

Blanche took no notice of the implied sarcasm, but went on complainingly :

"Then there were the chickens crowing in the middle of the night, and answering each other from miles around ; and then again this morning the cows and the geese, too, were just as noisy. It seems to me that the animals here make themselves more important and consequential than the human beings."

"Perhaps they have a right to do so," Flora answered: "you know Gough's story of the Irishwoman's pig being the 'gentleman that paid the rint.' So, I suppose these animals are the gentlemen and ladies who pay the rent here."

"Where in the world, Flora, do you pick up such vulgar anecdotes?" inquired Blanche, with an expression of disgust.

"I did not pick it up," replied Flora, quickly ; "Lena Hoffman found it for me at one of Mr. Gough's lectures. You ought to remember it as well as I, for you were present when she told it."

"I always make it a point to forget every-

thing of that sort," said Blanche, with an air of self-satisfaction.

"And geography and history, too, in the same way," retorted Flora; "but my memory is not as accommodating as yours."

"I do wish, Flora, you would let me go to sleep, instead of talking such nonsense," returned Blanche, with the air of one who is being ill-used.

"Oh! by all means," said Flora; "it would be quite as agreeable to me as to you."

Blanche returned no answer to this very candid remark. She was very drowsy, and preferred going to sleep to entering upon a war of words in which she was pretty well assured Flora would come off conqueror. Flora, on the contrary, was wide awake. She remained in bed for a while, turning from side to side uneasily. Suddenly the idea occurred to her of unpacking her trunk, which she instantly concluded to do; and this business was barely accomplished when the first bell rang. She aroused Blanche, who resumed her complaints as soon as she got out of bed; and then, upon finding that Flora's dresses were

all hanging in the wardrobe, a new fountain of bitterness seemed to be unsealed.

“And we must unpack our trunks, without having any one to help us,” she whined. “This is really barbarous! Those who cannot afford to keep maids ought not to invite respectable people to visit them.”

“Perhaps we might be told that we ought to have brought maids with us,” Flora answered. “Besides, Blanche,” she continued, “to be perfectly serious, I have doubts about our having been invited.”

Blanche opened her eyes to their fullest extent.

“I do not mean to say,” Flora went on, “that mamma forced us upon the family against their will, or that we had never had an invitation to make them a visit; but I know that it was she who first suggested it on this occasion.”

“I cannot understand why mamma should send us here this summer,” mused Blanche.

“I can explain it,” said Flora. “Papa has not been making much money lately, and this visit of ours is an economical contrivance.”

Blanche sighed as she went on with her dress-

ing. She was not so largely endowed with conversational powers as her sister, and the strange events of the past few days had not tended to increase the flow except in a certain direction. Nor was she gifted with much natural energy, and her toilet now progressed so slowly that Flora began to fear that she would not be ready by the time the second bell should sound.

"Come, Blanche!" she said, "you must hurry. Tell me which dress you mean to wear, and I will get it out for you."

Blanche designated the dress, and again began a tirade against what she was pleased to style the barbarous customs of the house.

"But then you know, Blanche," said Flora, interrupting her, "that when one is in Rome, one must do as the Romans do."

Flora never nursed her troubles. When she found herself called upon to do what she did not like, she fought resolutely against it, but if it proved to be inevitable, she submitted; and when this was done, she was seldom heard giving utterance to useless complaints. So now the petulant whinings of Blanche annoyed her.

The caution to Blanche had not been given un-

necessarily, for the bell rang while she was arranging her collar.

“There is my trunk unlocked,” she cried, as Flora was hurrying her out of the room.

“Never mind your trunk,” said Flora, still keeping on close behind her; “there is no one here to steal from it. David and Jemima are all right, I have no doubt.”

The morning worship was conducted in a similar manner to that of the previous evening, which was of small account to the visitors, who, although sitting quietly by, scarcely heard a word. Breakfast followed, and the table was still furnished with the requisite amount of silver and damask. When the meal was over Flora walked out on the piazza, with a desire to see how the view looked by daylight. Willie followed his cousin John closely, for he had made an engagement with him before worship to go in the wagon to some distant hay-field, and was afraid of being forgotten. Blanche went up stairs to assure herself of the safety of her trunk, and to perform the disagreeable task of unpacking. While she was thus engaged her cousin Lucy knocked at the door, and upon receiving permission, entered the

room, carrying a bucket evidently intended to hold the waste water.

“Shall I put your things to air?” she inquired timidly, with a glance towards the bed, which had not been disturbed since the girls left it.

The question was put in the tone of one asking a favor.

Blanche looked up hastily from her trunk with a flushed face and nodded an assent.

“Can it be possible,” she whispered to herself, “that we are expected to make our own beds, and that Lucy Morris is the chambermaid?”

Lucy went quietly on with her business of airing the bed, entirely unconscious that there could be any thought of impropriety connected with her work, and Blanche resumed her unpacking. Both were silent—the one from a timid hesitation as to how she should commence the conversation, and the other from a ridiculous feeling of contempt towards people who did their own work. But Lucy had an intuitive perception that there was something amiss with Blanche, that she was uncomfortable and dissatisfied; and desiring to remove the cause if possible, she overcame her feeling of reserve sufficiently to say in a gentle tone,

“Is there anything that I can do for you, Cousin Blanche? If you need anything that we can get for you, I wish you would let us know.”

“Thank you; you are very kind, but I am not needing anything,” Blanche replied.

The words were very proper, but they were not candid, and there was a frigid politeness in the speaker's manner that chilled Lucy. She left the room, but returned in about a half hour with water to fill the pitchers, when, finding the bed unmade, and Blanche still occupied about her trunk, she quietly spread the covers herself. She had completed the task, and gone away for the second time, when Flora entered.

“O Blanche!” she exclaimed, after carefully closing the door, “it is fortunate that you went up stairs immediately after breakfast, or your nerves would have received a fearful shock. I saw your aunt at the kitchen door, with a large tow apron tied around her waist, scouring a pan; and I saw your cousin John wearing a patched linen coat, with every particle of starch out of it, and an old, yellow straw hat, broken at the edge, starting off down the lane in a hay-wagon drawn by oxen!”

It was now Blanche's turn to complain of the peculiar use of the possessive pronoun in her favor.

"It is perfectly ridiculous in you, Flora," she said, plaintively, "to call these people my relations, when they are yours, too."

"I am sure I did not say they were not my relations; I merely mentioned the fact that they were yours," replied Flora, with an air of injured innocence. "But whatever you may choose to think," she continued, "Willie has no notion of denying them; he is delighted. John Morris is a hero in his eyes. I wish you had seen his air of triumph as he rode off with him in a hay-wagon."

"You had no right to let him go," said Blanche, solemnly. "Willie is naturally inclined to be rude, and he will be learning all sorts of vulgar habits."

"Do talk sensibly for once in your life, Blanche," replied Flora, impatiently. "I should like to know how I could prevent Willie from going with his cousin, after his father had given him permission to do so. Then you know, just as well as I, that he has no better companions at

home. Coachmen, butcher's boys, and even coal-heavers occasionally, are his chosen associates, and stables and blacksmith-shops his favorite places of resort. A man is a man and a boy a boy to Willie; the only distinction that he understands between them being, which is likely to afford him the largest amount of amusement? I used to wonder where our brother got such a disposition, and now I know perfectly well."

Flora paused from sheer exhaustion, and there was silence for a few moments. Blanche was the first to break it this time. She needed sympathy, and she could best obtain it from her fellow-sufferer; so, smoothing down her ruffled temper, she said, with a sigh:

"O Flora! do you know that we must make our own beds? Lucy Morris did it this morning, but I saw by her manner that we were expected to do it ourselves. They do not keep any chambermaid."

"I am not a servant, and will never make the bed!" exclaimed Flora, with a flushed face.

"It is very distressing, but I do not see what we are to do," said Blanche, taking out the novel which she had been reading upon the previous

day, and throwing herself upon the top of the neatly-made bed.

Flora felt like a chained prisoner, to whom there was no escape. She strummed upon the window-sill with such vehemence as to bruise her finger-ends severely. She had come up stairs with very different feelings from those which she was experiencing, and her remarks to Blanche upon entering the room did not express the real emotions of her heart, being merely intended as a little by-play, previous to a burst of enthusiasm upon the beautiful view from the piazza with which she meant to favor her, and which, in her estimation, seemed almost sufficient in itself to atone for the rusticity of the inhabitants. But Blanche had put her out of humor with her lecture about their brother; and this last information concerning the chamberwork of the establishment proved entirely too much for her equanimity. She looked very angry now, as she stood at the window inspecting her injured finger-tips, from which the blood seemed almost ready to start.

A knock was heard at the door and their aunt entered—without the tow apron now, yet wear-

ing a dark calico dress, which was too short by several inches to suit the taste of her fashionable young visitors. She came in in her brisk, cheery way, and glancing at the recumbent figure of Blanche upon the bed, inquired whether she were sick or had not rested well upon the previous night.

Blanche colored slightly, and denied being sick, but acknowledged having had her slumbers disturbed.

“I came to ask,” said Mrs. Morris, “whether you would like to ride down to the sea this morning? The carriage can be got ready in a half hour, which will give you plenty of time to look at the bathers and return home before dinner-time.”

The horizon began to brighten up considerably to both young ladies. Blanche prepared to lay aside her indolence and Flora her ill-humor. They immediately expressed their willingness to comply with the invitation, and made a variety of inquiries as to the distance from the sea, whether there were many bathers, &c. They found that the sea was about a mile and a half distant by the road, that there was a good beach, and at certain seasons there was a consid-

erable number of bathers. This suggested a new topic for regret; they had brought no bathing-dresses with them. Mrs. Morris proposed sending for these, and then Blanche remembered that their dresses had become too short for them, besides being shabby, and that their mother, not thinking them worth bringing home, had given them to a servant at the hotel where they were staying. And then their aunt overcame this difficulty by suggesting that they should purchase material at the store, and make up the dresses themselves.

"I wonder if we can do it?" Blanche said, doubtfully.

The idea of making a bathing-dress seemed to her almost as formidable as making a house.

"Certainly, you can," replied her aunt; "I will cut them out and fit them for you, and you will have no difficulty."

Her confident air encouraged them, and they determined to choose the material and commence making the dresses as soon as possible. When this matter was settled, Mrs. Morris left them, being suddenly reminded of some culinary operations which would require attention.

At the appointed time the carriage drew up before the door. Their uncle acted as coachman now, and their father and Cousin Lucy were to be of the party.

Willie, too, had been invited, and had accepted the invitation enthusiastically; but he had not yet made his appearance, and they waited for him. Presently he came in sight, running across the fields, followed by Nero, a large Newfoundland dog belonging to the household, with whom he was already upon the most intimate terms, with that peculiar sort of free-masonry which generally exists between a boy and a dog.

“Oh dear!” he gasped, quite out of breath from the exertion he had been making, “I should like very much to go down to the ocean, but Cousin John cannot leave his hay, and I am having a splendid time.”

“Oh, very well,” replied his father, “do just as you please.”

“But, Willie,” remonstrated Blanche, making an effort to detain him, “you must remember that you are not to soil your clothes; and you had much better put on your gloves.”

“Well, Blanche! you have certainly hit upon

novel suggestions for Willie," said Flora; "you might as well advise a duck that is swimming in the water to wear a life preserver and not to get its feet wet."

"I do not believe that mamma would approve of his working in the hay at all," replied Blanche, plaintively; "but I am not to blame. I cannot prevent it."

"Of course you are not to blame, and nobody expects you to prevent it," retorted Flora; "while papa is here I should think he would be the only person properly held accountable for Willie."

These remarks were lost to the ears of the gentlemen, as the carriage was moving rapidly on its way; and Flora's mind, being relieved of this last burden, was able now to take its usual delight in nature.

"O Lucy!" she exclaimed, "what beautifully smooth grass you have here! It looks as if it were freshly rolled every day."

"It is the cows who deserve the credit," replied Lucy; "they keep it smooth by constant cropping."

They were passing down the main street of the

village, and presently they came to a long pond, shaded by trees, on which a number of geese and ducks were swimming, and again Flora was in an ecstasy.

“What elegantly white geese those are!” she exclaimed. “They look just like swans.”

Lucy smiled and nodded assentingly. It was always very pleasant for her to hear the praises of anything that belonged to her native place, even if it were only the geese.

“All Flora’s geese are swans,” remarked Blanche, quietly.

This was an unusually bright speech for Blanche, and it surprised Flora so much that she concluded to allow it to pass unanswered, and a slight pause followed the unexpected scintillation.

Upon the elevation just above the pond was a burying-ground of very ancient date, for it had been more than two hundred years since the place was first settled, and death is never very tardy in making inroads upon even the healthiest settlements. Here Lucy pointed out a monument, which she told them was erected in memory of eighteen sailors, who had been wrecked upon the

coast some miles below. There had been twenty-one on the vessel, all of whom were lost; but the bodies of the captain and his two officers were claimed by friends, while these eighteen poor fellows had no one to care for them. So the good people of the village had had them brought up and buried in the same hallowed spot with their own loved ones, and a funeral sermon was preached, and tears were shed over them; and although they had been strangers in life, yet in their death they were recognized as brothers.

It was a simple statement of a fact, but Lucy told it with a gentle pathos that affected their hearts; and although they were not accustomed to exhibit such emotions, yet tears were in the eyes of all three, as in imagination they pictured the poor men struggling vainly for life upon the stormy waves until at last they were overpowered by death in the very sight of land. But young people are sometimes capable of making very rapid transitions from one feeling to its opposite, and so it happened at this time. A very stylish-looking carriage, in which three elegantly dressed women were sitting, passed them.

“Whose carriage is that?” inquired Blanche,

quickly, all traces of sorrow instantly disappearing from her face, and leaving only an expression of the liveliest curiosity.

“That is Mr. Grampion’s carriage,” replied Lucy, quietly; “his family have been coming here for the last two seasons.”

Blanche and Flora each began silently to build airy castles founded upon this information. These were evidently people of some consequence, and here was an unexpected promise of making congenial acquaintances. Such stylish horses, equipage and servants! And the ladies had such an aristocratic air about them! They had instantly recognized that, notwithstanding the rapidity with which the carriage had passed them. In the midst of these pleasing anticipations a difficulty occurred to Flora. She had not noticed any of the usual signs of recognition being exchanged between the occupants of the two vehicles.

“Are you acquainted with this family?” she inquired of Lucy.

“Not at all,” replied Lucy; “I do not think that they are on visiting terms with any of the

Brighton people. Their acquaintances, I believe, are from the city."

Here was a new and bitter disappointment, for which some one must be to blame, and Lucy, being on the spot and the most suitable person, was held responsible and censured accordingly.

"I wonder if papa knows them?" said Blanche.

"To be sure he does," returned Flora; "but of course we could not expect them to form acquaintance among those who are so entirely out of their circle."

"I cannot imagine what inducement they can have to come to a place where there is so little good society," said Blanche.

Lucy looked up hastily. She was beginning to understand now what it was in her cousin's manner which had seemed so peculiar to her, and her timidity vanished with the understanding.

"I think you are mistaken, Cousin Blanche," she said, very quietly; "for you have not been here long enough to know what kind of society we have. "And besides," she added, quickly, "you cannot know who the Grampions are, or whether they are the kind of people that one would desire to visit."

Lucy was perfectly ignorant of the art which her cousins had acquired of judging the qualifications of strangers from the outward circumstances by which they were surrounded. A contemptuous smile curled the lip of Blanche, but it was quite lost upon the person for whom it was intended. Lucy, having given expression to her feelings, now sat quietly looking out of the carriage window, her heightened color alone showing the excitement which she had undergone. Flora was angry at the prospect of being disappointed in her hope of forming a fashionable acquaintance, and yet she could not help admiring her cousin's manner. With all her gentleness and simplicity, Lucy was certainly by no means deficient in independence and self-respect.

A sudden turn in the road brought them in view of the ocean and afforded a new subject for contemplation. The surf was unusually high this morning, and there were but few bathers, although there were perhaps a dozen or more vehicles upon the beach. Among these was the carriage which had so recently attracted their notice. It was too conspicuous in contrast with its plainer neighbors to remain long unobserved.

Blanche and Flora sat down upon the beach with the rest of the party, their attention all the time alternating between the splendid waves which dashed furiously against the shore, and the stylish-looking occupants of the carriage near by. They wondered who these Grampions could be. The name sounded strangely familiar to both, and yet they had no recollection of having met them either in the city or at any watering-place. Still they must belong to the very best society, judging from appearances, and the young ladies considered themselves too wise in matters of this sort to be mistaken.

"Perhaps they have been spending the last few years abroad," Blanche suggested; "everybody goes abroad now, and that may account for our not having met with them."

She had barely finished her suggestion when her uncle appeared, followed by an elderly and a young lady, whom he introduced as Mrs. and Miss Edmonds. Mrs. Edmonds welcomed the young strangers to Brighton, hoped that they might enjoy their visit, and promised to make an early call upon them with her daughter. Then,

after a few remarks upon everyday topics, she took leave of them.

“Who are those people?” Flora inquired of Lucy.

“Mr. Edmonds keeps a store in the village, and their house is not very far from ours,” Lucy replied.

Once more the lip of Blanche curled contemptuously, while she exchanged expressive looks with her sister, which Lucy saw, but did not appear to notice. Presently Flora had another question to ask:

“Are retail shopkeepers received into good society in Brighton?”

“Certainly,” Lucy answered; “and the Edmonds are very highly esteemed. Mr. Edmonds is a deacon in the church, and Mrs. Edmonds’ father was the settled pastor in this place for many years.”

Flora bit her lip and shrugged her shoulders. This was a new way of judging of one’s claim to social distinction.

“I wonder where we should be,” she thought to herself, “if our position in society was made to depend upon our standing in the church?”

But there was not much opportunity for private reflection, as other inhabitants of the place were waiting for introductions, for a visitor in the family of one was regarded in the light of a friend by all. But these all seemed to belong to the same class as the Edmonds—not one having that air of fashion which marked the Grampions, and which our young friends considered an essential qualification for all candidates for their favor. Blanche was firmly convinced that it was to the Grampions alone that she must look for whatever of happiness she might hope to derive from her visit.

On the way home she found what she had wanted—a favorable opportunity of questioning her father about these distinguished people. Did he know them?

“Certainly,” he replied; “there is but one family of the name, and they are well known in the city.”

“Are you personally acquainted with them, papa?” the young lady next inquired.

“I can hardly say that I am,” he said, with a peculiar expression, “and if I was, I might perhaps be rather slow in acknowledging it. Mr. Gram-

pion commenced life by keeping a low, disreputable tavern in the outskirts of the city. He was a good judge of liquor, and understood how to compound a sort of drink that pleased the palates of his customers. A dissipated young man, who inherited a large fortune from his father, was driving out one day and stopped at the house, and was so delighted with the drink, and with things about the house generally, that he concluded it was a pity to have such fine talents wasted in so poor an establishment. This was the beginning of Grampion's good fortune. Under the patronage of his new friend, he hired a larger house in a better neighborhood and enlarged his business, which, unfortunately for the community, became so flourishing that in the course of a few years he grew to be quite wealthy. I understood recently that he had bought a brown-stone house up town and set up a stylish carriage."

"This is the very same man," responded Mr. George Morris; "his fame reached this place almost as soon as his family."

Blanche and Flora did not relish in the least this history of the Grampions.

"I shall never again, as long as I live, attempt to

judge of a person by appearances," said Flora, with strong emphasis upon every word that she uttered.

"Now, do you know," remarked Blanche, coolly, "that I thought I detected a tinge of vulgarity about them all the time? There was something in their way of sitting in the carriage that impressed me with the idea that they were not accustomed to such things."

Lucy was astonished at this speech, as she distinctly remembered the decided manner with which Blanche had expressed her opinion of the high social standing of these people. Flora, on the contrary, being accustomed to hear her sister contradict her own statements, was not at all surprised, and allowed the remark to pass unnoticed as an everyday occurrence.

The party returned in time to eat an early dinner at what would be about the lunch hour at home. In the afternoon they took a pleasant drive of a few miles to a very beautiful harbor. John was the coachman now, and Willie was of the company, and he and Flora probably enjoyed the ride most of all; each in the same degree, although differing in their mode of expressing their satisfaction.

In the evening Mrs. Morris proposed music, and Blanche instantly cast a dubious look at the open piano. It was a cheap instrument, no doubt, she reasoned, bought more for ornament than use. That one glance was sufficient to show that she was mistaken. She recognized it as the production of a celebrated maker, although the case was not of the most elegant style. Both Flora and herself had been taking lessons from an expensive teacher for years, but now they excused themselves from playing, on the plea of having brought no music with them.

Lucy immediately went to the music-stand and took out her books and portfolio, which she offered for their inspection, but they declined looking over them. Then Lucy was requested to play, which she did instantly, without any of the customary show of affectation. Her execution was tasteful and correct for so young a performer, which did not escape the observation of her cousins, and greatly astonished them. Then, at her father's suggestion, she sang some pieces with her brother, in a style which was certainly very creditable to both. The songs were only simple ballads, which required no grand display of skill;

yet the voices were very musical and the expression uncommonly fine, and their uncle was charmed. He spoke quite enthusiastically, declaring that he had not had such a treat for years, the modern attempt at singing sounding to his ears strained and unnatural.

On the whole, there was less restraint now than upon the previous evening. Flora, feeling somewhat humbled at her mistake about the Gram-pions, condescended to ask her cousin John a few questions concerning the neighborhood. He answered very intelligently and in well-chosen language, which surprised her greatly in one whom she had seen riding in a rather uncleanly ox-cart, and wearing a patched linen coat and an old straw hat. Blanche tried hard to keep up a dignified reserve, but Willie managed to frustrate all her efforts by constantly exciting her indignation at his rude bluntness.

This night, too, passed more comfortably than the last had done. They went to bed tired and sleepy; the novelty of their position had worn off somewhat, and they slept well, in spite of the noisy tones of animated nature.

CHAPTER V.

MRS. GEORGE MORRIS.

ON awakening the next morning at the sound of the first bell, however, they found the same array of formidable difficulties still standing before them.

“O Flora,” sighed Blanche, “what shall we do about this dreadful bed? I almost hated to get into it last night, when I remembered that I must make it up this morning.”

“There is no *must* about it,” replied Flora. “I never shall do it. If Lucy Morris chooses to act as chambermaid here, let her have the full benefit of the situation. We can give her a fee, you know, when we leave.”

So they dressed and went down stairs to breakfast, and did not return to their room until Lucy had already passed through it with her bucket. Then they found, to their chagrin, that she had not acted as upon the previous day, and as they

had expected of her. The bed remained exactly as they had left it. Blanche was in despair, and Flora as determined as ever. Bed-time came again, and they found themselves obliged to overcome their feelings sufficiently to smooth the mattress and arrange the covers, that the bed might be made comfortable. A farce similar to this was enacted for three days in succession, and then our young lady friends were brought to realize the fact that they were reduced to the unpleasant necessity of being their own chambermaids.

During the morning of the second day of their visit they went with their aunt to the store to purchase material for their bathing-dresses. Here they were introduced, not only to the proprietor of the store, but also to Mr. Carter, his clerk, a young man wearing a gray suit and striped shirt, who waited upon them. A very chatty person he was, too, and volunteered a variety of remarks upon topics entirely disconnected with his peculiar line of business. The young ladies tried to check this freedom of speech, but in vain. Eyebrows were elevated to the highest point of surprise, and lips were curled into their most dis-

dainful expression, but all without producing the least effect upon him, so far as they could see. Flora at last grew tired of the effort, and being naturally talkative herself, was tempted into answering occasionally; but Blanche still strove to maintain a dignified and contemptuous silence until they had left the store. Then her indignation, so long pent up, began to look for a vent. She had detected a certain something in her aunt, which hitherto had exerted a restraining influence, and made her rather cautious about expressing her peculiar notions in her presence; but her feelings just now were so strong as to overcome this reserve. Blanche was not disposed to be passionate, being too indolent for that, but she was fretful and complaining, which was quite as annoying to her friends. That she was proud, vain and self-important to a ridiculous degree, you already know.

“Who is that young man in the store who talks so much, aunt?” she inquired, by way of commencement.

“Frank Carter,” replied her aunt; “I thought you heard the name when I gave the introduction.”

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"I heard the name," she said, speaking very deliberately; "but I wanted to know who he was."

"What claim he has to a respectable position in society, I suppose you mean?" her aunt questioned.

"Yes, ma'am," replied Blanche; "we are not accustomed to meet shopkeepers at home in good society."

Mrs. Morris did not answer immediately; she seemed to be gathering up all her forces for a suitable reply. Then she said:

"I want you to understand, Blanche, that your uncle and I are responsible for the respectability of those to whom we introduce you while you are our guests. I do not know exactly what class of persons you are in the habit of associating with at home. Our standard here may differ somewhat from yours; but, you may depend upon it, it is equally high, and there is not the slightest danger to you, either mentally or morally, in mixing freely with society in Brighton."

Flora listened to this speech with surprise. She had always connected her aunt's style of

dress and living with ignorance and vulgarity, but here was certainly a broad exception to the general rule which she had laid down. Her aunt talked at least like a respectably educated person. Blanche, too, felt herself mistaken in the estimate which she had formed of her antagonist's powers of argument, and regretted that she had entered upon the contest: but it was too late to recede, and she must make the boldest stand of which she was capable.

"I dare say, aunt," she said, "that these may be worthy people in their own way; but then, you know, they are entirely different from our friends, who are very exclusive and refined, and would never think of having on their visiting list those who keep small retail stores, and do their own work, like Mr. Edmonds, and Mr. Carter, and——"

Here Blanche found herself brought to a sudden stand. The additional name could not be supplied, as her knowledge of the household habits of Brighton only extended to her aunt's own family. In commencing her answer, she congratulated herself upon her fearlessness and courage; but all cause for congratulation was gone

now, as she walked on, timid and frightened, with flushed and averted face, not knowing how to proceed.

The silence, which was growing more and more awkward and painful to her, was broken by Mrs. Morris.

“You must excuse me, Blanche,” she said, “if I am perfectly frank with you in telling truths that may seem unkind; and believe me it is for your good, and not from a mere desire to hurt your feelings. Let me, first of all, advise you not to make contemptuous allusions to shopkeepers or working-people in this neighborhood. You may not perhaps know it, but your grandfather, on the father’s side, lived on the same place that we now occupy, only in a much smaller house, with fewer comforts and no luxuries, his family doing their own work, without the help of even one servant. Your mother’s father kept a small shop at “the Point,” and your mother was his principal saleswoman. Now, my dear child, I would not tell you this if it were not well known in the neighborhood. A display of haughtiness on your part might tempt some one to taunt you

with it, and I am anxious to save you from any such mortification."

"I cannot believe it," said Blanche, her voice trembling with excitement.

"Perhaps not," her aunt answered; "but, my dear Blanche, that will not alter the facts in the case, nor destroy their effect upon the minds of others."

She spoke very calmly, for, notwithstanding her folly, she deeply pitied Blanche.

Flora had taken no part in the argument, and her first impulse upon hearing the unpleasant piece of family history, was to exclaim, with Blanche, "I cannot believe it!" but her aunt's calm, sensible answer checked the useless denial, and convinced her of the truth of the statement. They had now reached home, which ended the discussion for the present. Blanche went immediately to her own room and Flora followed.

"Dear me, Blanche!" exclaimed the latter, as she closed the door, "this is dreadful news for us."

"I will never submit to it," repeated Blanche.

In her extreme mortification she scarcely knew what she said.

"Do you mean that you will not submit to the facts?" inquired Flora. "Well, if refusing to submit would alter them, I should agree with you. But, unfortunately for us, facts are stubborn things, and will remain in the way, however much we may rebel against them. I suppose all that we can do is to try to hide them where we can, and, where we cannot, follow Mr. Longfellow's advice, and 'suffer and be strong.'"

Blanche did not answer. She sat with down-cast eyes, busily engaged in tearing small fragments from the paper in which their bundle was wrapped, rolling these into pellets and throwing them upon the floor.

"O Blanche!" cried Flora, with an affected show of petulance, "do please stop scattering those things about. I presume paper is very hard to sweep up, and you know we are our own chambermaids."

"I believe, Flora Morris, that you have no proper pride about you," replied Blanche, with an air of vehemence quite unusual to her.

"Can you tell me, Blanche," inquired Flora, "exactly what quantity and quality of pride would be considered proper for the grand-

daughter of a farmer and retail shopkeeper, who did their own work?"

There was a very comical expression upon her face as she put this question to her sister. The state of affairs was assuming a ludicrous form to Flora.

"I wish you would stop saying such disagreeable things to me," replied Blanche, peevishly. "I will write to mamma, and tell her of the horrible stories we have heard, and beg of her to let me go home immediately."

Just as she had finished speaking, a knock was heard at the door, followed by the entrance of their father. He had brought some books belonging to Blanche, which she had placed in his charge, as there was not room for them in her own trunk, and had merely meant to leave them at the door, but upon seeing the disturbed faces of his daughters had changed his intentions.

Flora instantly referred the question to him for confirmation, and Blanche waited anxiously for his answer.

"Your aunt's story is quite true," he said, when he had heard it all; "and although she has left out some things which would have made the

facts look even worse to you than they now do, still I am surprised that she should have mentioned it at all."

Mr. William Morris rather prided himself upon being a self-made man; but his wife's constant effort had been to keep this idea in the background, and upon her account he had avoided expressing his opinions except when alone with his business acquaintance. Now he regretted that his sister-in-law had alluded to their humble origin, principally because he knew it would only serve to increase his wife's prejudices against her.

"I suppose we may blame ourselves for it, papa," said Flora; "we were offended at Aunt Mary for introducing us to the storekeeper, Mr. Edmonds, and his clerk, Mr. Carter; and Blanche spoke very indignantly about it; and this was what induced her to give us the precious piece of family history."

"It is never judicious to be haughty, girls," replied their father; "and as neither your mother nor I have any great cause for boasting on the score of ancestry, *you* should be particularly careful. The people here are all pretty much upon an equality. There are none either very

rich or very poor, and many of both sexes, who work at trades for a living, are the descendants of the best families, and consequently very respectably connected; and as there have always been unusually good schools at Brighton, its inhabitants are generally well educated. Everybody knows everybody else, for there is so little trade going on that there are no inducements offered for strangers to take up their abode here. I cannot see any reason why even your mother, with her peculiar notions on the subject, should object to your being friendly with all whom you may chance to meet, as it is merely for the time being; and when you leave this place your acquaintance with its people may cease, except, of course, so far as your own relations are concerned."

Mr. Morris might have taken a very different and much more elevated ground upon which to found his reasoning. He might have reminded them of the unimportance of all mere worldly distinctions when compared with the interests of eternity, and moralized upon the fact that outside adornments often hide a corrupt and depraved heart—that very often "that which is

highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." He might have gone further and warned them, too, of the great sin of indulging in pride, showing them from God's own word that he hates pride and arrogance, and will surely punish it. But Mr. Morris judged from a much lower standard than this. He had never accepted the Bible as his own rule of conduct, and was not therefore in the habit of quoting its arguments in support of his opinions.

"I dare say Aunt Mary is no better off than we are in respect to family," said Blanche, acting upon the principle that "misery loves company."

"You are quite mistaken there, Blanche," observed her father; "your aunt's family belonged to what you would call the *aristocracy* of the place. (I do not think the word is ever used here.) Plain as she appears to you, in her youth she spent several winters in Washington, and had free access to the best society there. Her father was a member of Congress for more than one term, and was a man of some note in his time. By-the-by, Mr. Norton, the brother of Mrs. Edmonds, is the present member from this district. So you see it will not do to judge of folks here

by the rules which we use at home; and I do hope you will both act prudently during your visit, and not do anything that will make you ridiculous."

With this fatherly caution he left them, and Flora turned to her sister.

"Well, Blanche," she said, "this is all very queer. Wonders will never cease! Just to think of those magnificent Grampsons being spurious, and Aunt Mary and Mrs. Edmonds being real! I am twisted around completely. I should like very much to know to what set we belong here in Brighton; shouldn't you, Blanche?"

But Blanche was in no humor to be amused.

"I do not think," she answered, evasively, "that family is of much account, after all. One ought not to be held responsible for one's grandfather; and people should be admitted to good society upon their own personal merits, which are certainly of most importance."

Blanche was right this time in her conclusion, though wrong in her premises. When the proud Jews boasted of having Abraham as their father, John gave them to understand that this was a matter of small importance in the sight of God,

who could so easily from the very stones raise up those who should so nearly resemble Abraham as to represent him more truly than his degenerate children. So now a spotless record of our own is of far more consequence to us than the highest ancestry.

"Why, Blanche," retorted Flora, with a quizzical expression, "that last remark of yours would suit the Grampions exactly."

"My remark had no connection whatever with the Grampions," returned Blanche.

There was silence for a few moments, and then Flora, with an assumed air of solemnity, inquired,

"Would you like to know what I intend to do in this fearful emergency?"

Blanche nodded assent, and Flora continued:

"I am going to try as far as possible to forget that I am a fashionable young lady from the city, and to act like the grand-daughter of a farmer and a shopkeeper."

Blanche looked quite horrified.

"Flora," she said, with a solemnity that was not assumed, "I do not know what mamma will say if you return vulgar and countrified."

"Never fear," replied Flora; "I shall tell her that I have been trying to copy the manners of my honored ancestry, and then I am sure she can make no objection."

The dinner bell sounded, and our young friends obeyed its call. Their uncle was to drive them out in a different direction on this afternoon, but Willie again refused to accompany them. He was going with his cousin John and Nero upon a fishing excursion.

"And, Flora," he said, "Cousin John says that when Pierrepont comes home I can go nearly every day fishing or boating. Cousin Pierrepont is very fond of both, and will not be so busy as John, because he is not a farmer; but yet I hardly know whether I shall like it entirely, for I am very fond of farm-work. O Flora," he continued with increasing enthusiasm, "I am having a splendid time! Aren't you? Cousin John is a trump, and so is Nero, and Lucy, and uncle, and aunt, and everybody at Brighton. I hope Pierrepont will be, too, but yet I do not know;" and Willie shook his head very doubtfully.

"Why, what is the matter with Pierrepont?"

inquired Flora. "From the way in which the people here talk about him, I supposed he must be the embodiment of perfection. His return from college appears to be looked forward to as a grand occasion."

"Oh yes, they are all very fond of him, and I suppose he is good enough in his way; but then," he added, lowering his voice, "John says that he is very religious and is learning to be a preacher. Still, if he knows how to fish and row a boat, it may not be so bad after all."

Flora suppressed a scream. Here was a new course of annoyance for poor Blanche—the prospect of living in the same house with a candidate for clerical orders.

Willie ran hastily across the fields to fulfill his engagement with John, and his sister looked after him with an amused consciousness that he at least inherited his grandfather's tastes, and then went to her room to get ready for the ride, and tell Blanche what she had heard about Pierrepont.

When the party returned from their ride they found Mrs. Morris entertaining visitors, who had called principally out of compliment to the strangers. Blanche held back from unwilling-

ness to meet them, but Flora urged her forward, whispering—

“Never mind, Blanche, we are having a grand opportunity to examine into the various phases of human nature.”

The inducement offered was scarcely appreciated by Blanche, yet she followed her sister into the parlor, knowing that there was no help for it. There was but one phase of human nature whose study was interesting to her; it was that which appeared dressed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.



CHAPTER VI.

A SABBATH AT BRIGHTON.

THE first Sabbath which Blanche and Flora spent at Brighton was a most delightful day, so far as the weather was concerned. In the great city which they had left the air was no doubt warm and uncomfortable, coming as it did to the inhabitants freighted with unpleasant odors, gathered in its passage through courts and alleys where human beings congregated in one dense and unwholesome mass. But here, where the cool sea-breeze swept freely over the the broad Atlantic, or across grassy fields and through leafy trees, it was pure and refreshing. The weather was certainly beyond complaint, and yet the young ladies arose from their bed with uneasy forebodings.

“Ah, Blanche!” sighed Flora, “I do wonder how we shall manage to get through the day?”

At home our Sundays were not so very tedious, after all, because we had so much to see at church. The sermons, to be sure, were very prosy, but then they never lasted over a half hour, and it required nearly that much time to look over the congregation. Professor Ricardo, too, gives us such splendid music, and after the services are over we see all our friends, and can talk about everything."

"There is one thing," replied Blanche, philosophically—"as it will only be for this once, I think we shall be able to endure it. I have written such a letter to mamma that I am pretty sure she will be induced to send for us to return home before another week is over. I tried papa, but he is incorrigible, on account of his strong prejudice in favor of these people. Mamma has more correct notions, and she must see the impossibility of our remaining shut up here for two whole months."

Flora appeared to be very much engaged just then in deciding which of two collars she should wear at breakfast, and returned no answer. The fact was, that, to her great surprise, Flora found that her feelings were not in sympathy with her

sister's. She began to doubt whether she really desired to return home so soon. She felt some curiosity to see her cousin Pierrepont, about whom she had already heard so much; and there was a gipsying party to come off in a week or two, which she would like to attend. Then, too, although she was scarcely conscious of it, there were feelings of respect and affection springing up in her heart towards these long-neglected relations, which made her desirous of knowing them better, they were so entirely different from those with whom she had been accustomed to associate; and the views which seemed to govern their conduct, although very peculiar, were certainly of a much higher grade than those which she had been in the habit of hearing expressed. These thoughts passed rapidly through her brain; yet, scarcely comprehending them herself, she did not care to confide them to Blanche, who, she well knew, would not be able to appreciate them. So she remained, silently and mechanically turning over one collar after another, as if in profound meditation upon its claim for preference, until the ringing of the second bell aroused her. Then, hurriedly selecting the one

which just then happened to be nearest to her hand, she put it on hastily and went down stairs.

Prayers and breakfast passed pretty much as usual, only in the former petitions were offered with special reference to the sacred day, and during the latter the conversation turned principally upon matters pertaining to the church; and Flora noticed, when her father began to talk of something connected with the farm, that her uncle very dexterously changed the subject by asking some question about the meetings of the church which they attended in the city. Her father, being but poorly posted up in church affairs, could not answer very intelligently; but her uncle gained his object, and secular subjects were dropped for the present.

The first bell for church rang at ten o'clock as a warning, and the services did not commence until a half hour later. The second sounded out musically a few minutes before church-time, and while they were on the way to church. The wide street of the village, which through the week had looked so quiet, and at times almost deserted, was now full of life and motion. Group after group

of men, women and children walked sedately upon the sidewalk; while through the middle of the street vehicles of nearly every description, from the neat family carriage, newly painted and varnished, to the rough farm cart, passed rapidly along in quick succession. All seemed to be moving in the same direction, drawn towards the same point by some invisible but powerful agency.

Although having no religious appreciation of this scene, yet Flora was attracted by it, as to a pleasing picture, and remarked upon it to her uncle, with whom she happened to be walking.

"It is certainly a very beautiful, and to me inspiring sight," he replied; "and in looking at it I am always inclined to exclaim with the Psalmist, 'How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house; they will still be praising Thee. They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper

in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.’”

Flora looked up into her uncle's face in amazement. This was all a new and strange language to her, which she could not understand; and yet one glance at his countenance, so serious in its expression, was sufficient to convince her that he felt the full force of every word that he had uttered. There is that in the human heart which will always respond to real, earnest enthusiasm, even where the mind may not be capable of appreciating the principles which inspire it; so now Flora walked silently forward, under the influence of a sensation whose power she saw, but could not comprehend. “Surely,” she reasoned, “there must be something more in religion than I supposed. It cannot be mere delusion or gloomy asceticism.”

A feeling of reverence for her uncle arose in her heart, as for one far exalted above the petty cares of this earth—passing through the world, but never turning aside after its vanities, keeping the straight road to heaven. As she ascended the church steps it almost seemed as if she were treading upon holy ground; and when Mrs. Ed-

monds spoke to her she returned the greeting with an unusual degree of respect, such as she might have shown towards the descendant of a race of kings. To be the daughter of a clergyman who preached such principles as those that inspired her uncle George, seemed just then to Flora a greater distinction than even royal ancestry could confer. She trode softly along the aisle, and entered the pew as one who walks in a dream; and, alas! this all proved to be but an illusive dream to her. She raised her eyes, and the sight of a very antique bonnet worn by an old lady in an adjoining seat was sufficient to turn the whole current of her thoughts. A general survey of the costume of the entire congregation, so far as she could see them, ensued, and the battery of her criticism was brought to bear upon them. Bonnets and mantillas were condemned unmercifully, and their wearers pronounced uncultivated and rude, simply because these outward habiliments did not accord with the taste of the critic. A feeling of self-gratulation took possession of her that her lot had not been cast among such a people.

The clergyman arose for prayer, and the con-

gregation simultaneously followed his example. The prayer was short, only containing a few fervent petitions that the Lord would be present with his people and bless the services in which they were about to engage. A hymn followed, sung not by the choir merely, but by the entire assembly. Then came the reading of the Scriptures, and then another prayer, much longer than the first, and more diversified in its petitions. Throughout these exercises Flora's mind was crowded with a curious medley of contradictory emotions. Now she was admiring the calm, intellectual countenance of the clergyman, his clear tones and serious manner, all so exceedingly appropriate to his high position. Involuntarily she found herself repeating Goldsmith's well-known description of the village pastor:

"At church with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorn the venerable place.

His ready smile a parent's warmth exprest;
Their welfare pleased him and their cares distrest;
To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven—
As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm;

Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

The next moment she was contemptuously ridiculing the dresses of a woman and her children in one of the side pews near the pulpit. They had been gotten up, evidently after much effort, with the desire of making as genteel an appearance as possible. The mother's entire outfit could not have cost originally as much as Flora's hat; and now, after each article had been made over several times, the young lady regarded the attempt as a complete failure. Once more, attracted by the musical tones of the clergyman or some striking words from the chapter that he was reading, she would listen to a few verses. Then, again, she would occupy her mind by contrasting the gorgeous embellishments of the church which she was accustomed to attend at home with the plain, inexpensive structure in which she now sat; the extravagantly attired audience in the city with the economical garb of those around her; and always very much to the disparagement of the latter. Her imagination seemed to have place for every variety of thought but one—the correct and proper feeling, and that alone, which

she had a right to cherish in the "house of God." To judge from the manner in which she had been occupied, one might suppose that she was in some hall erected for the express purpose of exhibiting the most elegant specimens of each article of clothing that could be procured, and that all who failed in this were entitled to the sharpest criticism and deepest censure of the observers. Not once did it occur to her that this was the sanctuary of the Lord, built only for His worship, whose walls she had no right to enter except in the character of a humble worshiper of Him who is to be worshiped in spirit and in truth, "who is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him."

The minister read out his text: "This one thing I do; forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The words sounded entirely new and strange in her ears. She might possibly have heard them before, but if so they had not left even the faintest impression upon her memory. He pro-

ceeded with his explanation, describing the great apostle, surrounded by a crooked and perverse generation, going steadily forward, with one great purpose in view. Ignoring entirely all those things which men are constantly striving after as the grand objects of pursuit, he never attempted to draw the world and religion together, in a vain effort to secure both; never seeking to obtain wealth and salvation—earthly honor here and a heavenly crown hereafter; having but one object, one aim, one great purpose of life; acquiring on this account extraordinary attainments in piety, and uncommon success as a minister of the gospel.

As she listened to his eloquent description, her heart went out enthusiastically, not only towards Paul and Mr. Lambert, the speaker, but also to all who were treading the same glorious path. She looked up at her uncle's broad, white brow—so markedly white in contrast with the lower portion of the face, bronzed by exposure to sun and wind—and in her imagination it almost seemed as if a peculiar halo were resting upon it—an outward token, such as the Saviour might choose to put upon his faithful followers. Then,

turning her eyes to Lucy's calm, sweet countenance, she thought it would require but a very slight touch of fancy's penciling to invest it with such an expression as an angel might be supposed to wear.

But when Mr. Lambert went on to make a personal application of the text, and urged upon his hearers the duty and necessity of following the example of the apostle, if they would secure the heavenly prize, resolutely renouncing everything that might stand in their way, and making this the one great object of their lives, there was no response in her bosom. She sat perfectly unmoved and unconcerned, as if the matter were one in which she had no interest, or as if her ears were deaf or her mind incapable of perception.

Once in ancient times there was a prophet full of worldly ambition and governed only by sordid motives. He stood upon an elevation and looked over the promised land and upon God's favored people, and inspired by an involuntary admiration, called forth by the beauty and excellency of their land, he exclaimed, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles,

O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes, which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees besides the waters. Blessed is He that blesseth Thee, and cursed is He that curseth Thee." "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." But, unfortunately for himself, his enthusiasm expended itself in mere expressions of admiration, powerless in themselves for good. They effected no material change in his character or habits, nor did they lead him to pursue that course through which alone he might hope to obtain the blessing which he professed to covet. And now Flora Morris was indulging in a somewhat similar admiration. She could see the beauty of a consistent religious profession in others, but she had no idea of adopting it for herself, although she would gladly claim its privileges and rewards. In a very short time the prophet died in battle, among the enemies of those whom he had professed to admire—a sad illustration of the uselessness of mere words. In Flora's heart, too, a battle was waging, and she was taking part against the good cause. But the warfare was not

ended, and although exposed to imminent danger, yet, through the mercy of God, there was still hope for her.

While Flora's thoughts were thus busy, Blanche was indulging in a very different, though quite as varied, train of ideas. She did not hear one word of the text, and Mr. Lambert's eloquent descriptions were quite lost upon her. Now she was mourning over the fate which compelled her to associate even for a few days with such plain, unfashionable people; and then she was rejoicing over the prospect of a deliverance, in answer to the appealing letter which she had written to her mother. In the light of this hope she drew pictures of a pleasant career for the summer in the old haunts and among her gay acquaintances, until her present surroundings were lost sight of, and she was already in quite a different circle. Again, suddenly, she would be brought back to reality by a glimpse of some garment particularly offensive to her ideas of good taste, when all her disgust and contempt would return, and a frown settled upon her features.

And yet this time so carelessly frittered away,

and these holy teachings so utterly neglected, were not lost. God has said of his word, "It shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I have sent it." There were those in the house who listened eagerly to the sermon, and drew spiritual strength and courage from it to press onward in the good path which they had already chosen. And some who had run well for a season, but whose zeal had died out and who had almost fainted by the road, received new vigor to pursue their way with songs of rejoicing. Nor was it to these alone that the word was blessed. One timid soul had entered the sanctuary, halting between two opinions—anxious to reach heaven, yet unwilling to let go of the world (for even the world as it existed in Brighton had its enchantments and temptations)—wishing to serve God and offer incense upon the shrine of Mammon. This poor, feeble soul, in danger of being eternally lost, listened attentively to the stirring words of the preacher, and was persuaded by them to abandon the useless effort, and to resolve in the strength of the Lord to follow the example of the great apostle, and

with singleness of heart press "towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

The morning services ended, and upon the portico and lawn in front of the church were many friendly greetings exchanged and kind inquiries made after absentees. None seemed to be forgotten; and Flora, who had joined Lucy, wondered how it was possible in so large a congregation, where there were so few vacant seats, to notice who happened to be away. She called upon Lucy to account for this, and Lucy smiled as she answered,

"Why, Cousin Flora, we are all acquainted here and interested in each other, and when this is the case one is apt to be very observant."

"But you do not pretend to tell me," said Flora, "that you really care for that coarse-looking man, or any one of his dozen children?"

"Certainly, I do," Lucy replied, her voice slightly raised, and her heightened color betraying some excitement. "I wish you would not judge from appearance, Cousin Flora. Indeed it is hardly fair to do so, for one is not altogether accountable for that. Mr. Adams is one of our

very best men. He is excellent in a prayer-meeting, and very highly esteemed in Brighton."

Flora's eyes were extended once more to their full width. It was the first time she had ever heard a man's merits to distinction founded upon his ability to conduct a prayer-meeting; and she was wondering upon what footing their acquaintances at home would stand in Brighton. But Lucy did not notice the effect of her words, and went on in her simple way:

"His children, too, are all remarkably intelligent and interesting. The sick one seems particularly so to me, and she is a member of my Sunday-school class. But, by-the-way, Flora, it is just as well to be correct with regard to numbers. Mr. Adams' family consists of seven children, including the absentee."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Flora, in feigned surprise this time. "Only six present this morning! Well, they must have a wonderful faculty at spreading themselves. But pray tell me, Lucy, what occupation does your friend, Mr. Adams, follow?"

The question had scarcely left her lips when she remembered her aunt's lesson of the previous

day, and would have gladly recalled it if she could.

“His principal business is fishing,” Lucy answered; “but when not engaged in this way, he has quite a variety of trades, and is willing to employ his time in any way that is needed. Indeed, he is one of the most valuable and useful men that we have, and I hardly know how we should get along without him.”

This was a new light in which to regard one in Mr. Adams’ station in life. Flora had heard the laboring classes spoken of as the plagues of society and necessary evils, but never before in her presence had the least allusion been made to their usefulness or value in the community. She remained silently considering the matter until they had reached her uncle’s door. A lunch was very soon prepared for them, and when it was over, the family commenced making arrangements to return to the second church service, which was to be held at one o’clock.

Blanche resolutely refused to go, declaring privately to her sister that it was perfectly preposterous and not to be thought of for a moment—that she had quite enough of church-going for

one day, and meant to take a nap and finish her novel in the afternoon. I am sorry to say that her father was of the same opinion; at least so far as to prefer a nap to Mr. Lambert's sermon. So these two retired to their rooms.

Flora was extremely fond of novelty, and her curiosity was now fully aroused to know something more of the habits of this peculiar people, among whom for a season her lot had been cast. There was no timidity about her; so she boldly announced her intention of accompanying her cousin Lucy to church and Sunday-school, held immediately after the church service. Willie, too, was going, for his cousin John had invited him, and he was easily influenced by those whom he fancied. John had a Sunday-school class, too, which Willie thought he would like to attend, and become acquainted with the boys in the place. In fact, Willie had formed a violent attachment to Brighton and its inhabitants, declaring the latter to be a most sensible sort of people, with no nonsense about them, and he showed his appreciation by trying to identify himself with them as far as he could.

"I am glad you are going, Floy," he said,

aside to his sister ; “ the sermon is a bore, and the church is rather slow ; but the folks here are all so nice that I like to please them ; and then I dare say the Sunday-school will be first-rate. Besides,” he added, “ it seems only right when we are visiting to try to do as the people do.”

Willie was not remarkable either for his refinement of manner or expression ; but his affection for these relations had taught him a principle upon which are founded many of the rules which should regulate our conduct when we are away from home—to endeavor, as far as possible, to conform to the laws of the household which we enter upon the terms of a visitor, and to use every effort to make those around us comfortable and happy.

The text in the afternoon was, “ Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die ? ” The preacher compared the two classes : those who were striving to follow the example of Paul in pressing towards the mark, and those who were walking in an entirely different direction, and upon a road that could only end in death ; warning the latter to accept the offered invitation and turn from the evil way before it should be too

late. The sermon was very solemn, and produced an impression even upon the mind of the inattentive Flora. But, unfortunately, such impressions are not always lasting. Religion looked very beautiful to her as seen in her cousin Lucy, but she had not yet made up her mind to choose it for herself. All her past education and training had had but one object—to make her shine in fashionable life; and to gain this end large sums of money had been expended. How could she then do that which would render these efforts useless, or worse than useless, and disappoint all her mother's expectations? So she resolved to go on and accomplish the plans laid out for her. She would enter the gay world, and do her best to shine there as a brilliant star; and then, in a few years, when her light should grow dim, or she should have wearied of gayety, as must happen in the course of time, she would retire from the world, perhaps into some quiet country place like Brighton, and become a sort of Lady Bountiful in the neighborhood. She could not exactly make up her mind to follow Lucy's example, in associating, upon terms of equality, with working-people; but she would patronize them with gen-

tleness and dignity, looking kindly after their wants, yet keeping them at a proper distance. Flora was still too slightly acquainted with Brighton to understand the state of society there. She learned afterwards that Mr. Adams and the class which he represented were fully competent to supply the wants of their own households, and as they did not require such patronage as she proposed giving, would probably have regarded it only in the light of an impertinent interference if it had been attempted.

Flora's world was divided into two classes—the rich and the poor, the latter being in all respects subordinate to the former. She had no idea that what she called poverty might sometimes be more respectable and more desirable than wealth, and that there were men in Brighton, toiling for their daily bread, who would not willingly change places with the richest of her city acquaintance, knowing themselves to be possessed of an inheritance far more valuable than all the earthly treasures of which the great city could boast. So in her ignorance Flora dreamed on, indulging in idle fancies of wonderful acts of kindness which could never be accomplished, and carelessly letting

slip a golden opportunity of acquiring a present good.

The clergyman ended his sermon, and the pause put a sudden stop to Flora's wild imaginings. A short prayer was offered, followed by the singing of the hymn and the benediction, and then the congregation was dismissed, some to their homes and others to the Sunday-school. Flora, according to previous intentions, took her place with the latter. Her uncle was superintendent of the school, and her aunt and cousins were teachers. Lucy had charge of the infant department, and at her request Flora heard two of the little girls recite hymns and a few verses from the Bible. The school hour passed very pleasantly to all, and I trust profitably to many, and then teachers and pupils separated. Again there were exchanges of smiles and greetings and kind inquiries, and Flora's hand almost ached from the heartiness with which it was grasped as she was introduced to her uncle's friends. One vehicle after another drove up to the door and received its occupants, and then gave place to its successor. A responsive chord had been struck in Flora's breast, and in her esti-

mation at that moment all the mere polish of fashionable society dwindled into insignificance in comparison with this plain, hearty friendliness of manner. With these new views she felt no desire to criticise, and dresses and bonnets which ordinarily would have been considered fit objects for the display of her powers of wit and sarcasm were now scarcely noticed. She walked silently beside her cousin for a while, and then, remembering a question which she had intended to ask, she inquired why the church meetings so closely succeeded each other.

“Because,” replied Lucy, “so many of our church people live at a distance that they would not have time to drive home after the first service and back to the second if we held our meetings at the hours they do in the city. As it is, they bring a lunch with them, and remain for the intervening time, which saves a great deal of trouble.”

Then Flora had other questions to ask about the Sunday-school children and several of the grown people in whom she felt an interest; for, notwithstanding the unfashionable garb, there were some of those whom she had seen who were

really remarkable for regularity of features, and upon the whole she thought that she had never seen among so large an assembly so few homely faces.

Upon reaching home Flora found Blanche fast asleep upon the bed, with the novel open in her hand; and feeling rather drowsy from the unusual exertions she had been making, she concluded to put on her wrapper and lie down beside her. At the recommendation of Lucy, she had brought from the Sunday-school library Abbott's "Hoary Head and McDonner," and she concluded to pass the time, before going to sleep, in reading the story of Fergus. Although quite interested in this, her eyes gradually closed, and she fell asleep, leaving Fergus upon the pond, still struggling through the snow-drift. She was aroused from her slumbers by Blanche, who, having awakened, was opening a bureau drawer to select some articles suitable for her evening toilet.

It required several rubbings of the eyes and some little effort of the memory to enable Flora to recall the place she was in, the time and the circumstances. She had been dreaming that she

was at Newport and that Blanche was dressing for a party; and this impression was upon her mind when she awakened. A feeling of disappointment oppressed her, similar to what one might experience who, in the midst of some interesting narrative, finds that the most important leaves are missing, and that the story is brought to a sudden and untimely end. Then, as the truth gradually came upon her, she felt relieved, and the conviction forced itself upon her that, with all its disadvantages and privations, she would prefer remaining at Brighton.

Blanche, in the mean time, went on complaining of the tiresome day which she had spent. Sunday at home was not altogether agreeable, yet it had its alleviations; but Sunday at Brighton was unendurable. Then she would try to draw comfort from the hope of receiving the next day from her mother a favorable answer to her last letter; and so the afternoon passed away.

There were services held in the evening at the Brighton church, which were attended by all the members of the family, not even excepting Blanche, who went because there was no alternative but that of remaining at home alone. Mr.

Lambert preached a faithful sermon, which, I am sorry to say, was lost upon both the sisters. Blanche, in her ill-humor, seemed determined to be neither benefited nor pleased by anything in Brighton; and Flora, in her folly, spent the sacred hour in the indulgence of vain fancies, and heard nothing of the sermon but an occasional word or sentence, which failed to make any impression upon her mind.



CHAPTER VII.

STILL AT BRIGHTON.

THE Brighton mail of Monday brought to Blanche the anxiously-expected answer to her letter. She opened the envelope hastily and eagerly, but found herself doomed to another disappointment. Her proposal to return home had been negatived by her mother with her usual promptitude and decision, as an extract from the letter will sufficiently show:

“The arrangements made,” she wrote, “were the very best that could be done for you this summer, and cannot be altered. With regard to the family secrets which your aunt saw fit to impart to you, I can only say that it may, after all, be just as well for you to have learned them in this way. If she had not told you, there were others who would have done so, for it is scarcely possible for you to have remained in Brighton

for any length of time without hearing of them. Such knowledge is not agreeable, but it may not be quite useless, for allusions may be made which you will understand better how to meet, now that you know everything. By the way, this is one reason why I have always objected to your visiting in your uncle's family, and necessity alone induced me to consent to it for this summer. Of course, you must remember your aunt's story while you are at Brighton, but you may ignore it entirely when you return home. In the city, whatever may be said to the contrary, people make their own positions in society, and stand upon their own merits, irrespective of what their fathers may have done. There are many who visit in the very best circles, and whose right to do so is never questioned, whose ancestors were no better off than your own. I am sorry if you are not satisfied, but we cannot change our plans. There is one great advantage in your remaining where you are, which you may not appreciate, but which is nevertheless real. A quiet summer, such as you are now passing, will enable you to enjoy the gayeties of the winter more thoroughly, besides preserving your good looks. Next sum-

mer I hope we shall be able to take you both with us as usual, and at your ages one season is not of much consequence."

Poor Mrs. Morris! What a chapter of mistakes are contained in those few lines! And what a sermon might be written upon that last sentence! Just at the age when the most lasting impressions are made—when seed, whether for good or evil, is sown to ripen in eternity, with life so uncertain that it would be presumption to call one hour their own! Strange infatuation, to talk of a season at such an age as this as being of no consequence! Alas! from just such in eternity has the bitter cry gone up, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

Blanche read her mother's words, but failed to moralize upon them as we have done. They were far from satisfactory to her, and she, too, took exception to them, but for very different reasons. The season was of very great consequence in her estimation, but only because of the amount of present pleasure it might contain for her. She went on carefully reading every word until the end, still hoping that at the last her mother might relent—that she would find a post-

script to that purport. But in vain. There were one or two small items of unimportant news on the last page, and some general advice for herself and sister, and that was all. She finished the final line, and then, throwing the letter upon the floor, burst into tears. Flora was astonished. Constant fretting had become a habit with Blanche, but a good spell of crying was an unusual exhibition.

"Has anything happened? Is mother sick?" she inquired, breathlessly.

"No," replied Blanche, pointing to the letter.

Flora understood the signal as an invitation for her to read for herself, and being really concerned, she hastily picked up the letter, anxious to learn its contents. While endeavoring to do so the tongue of Blanche became loosened, and poured forth a mingled tide of reproach against her mother, father, her aunt and uncle, and all Brighton generally.

As you already know, my young reader, the substance of the letter was upon the whole satisfactory to Flora; and, having no grief of her own to overwhelm her, she turned to comfort her sister.

"Oh! never mind, Blanche, dear," she said; "you will get used to things here after a while; and then, you know, the holidays cannot last for ever. We must be back in the city by the middle of September at the farthest."

But Blanche was in no mood to be comforted. Her mind was too deeply absorbed by present disappointment to look forward to what the future might bring. Flora went on:

"And then, Blanche, you must remember that, after all, even fashionable watering-places have their annoyances and disappointments. There were those Vanderpools who treated us so shamefully at Newport. Before their own carriage came they could be very gracious indeed to get the use of ours, and then, when they did not need us any longer, they did not hesitate to give us the dead cut. And those haughty Roscoes at Saratoga were very sociable with us while it suited their purpose, and then, when others came whom they thought more aristocratic, they would scarcely condescend to speak to us. Such everlasting gossiping, too, as we had all the time! No one was safe from scandal; and we were constantly hearing such bitter things said about

people that I felt afraid to trust anybody. Then how completely fagged out we used to get, dressing up for the hops and balls! What with hair-dressers and mantuamakers, one was worn out before the evening came. To be sure, it was all very nice in the ball-room when everything went right, but generally things seemed more apt to go wrong than right. Then, when the bills came in, what a fearful time we used to have! The charge for everything was so exorbitant, and papa was so cross about it, that I used to think if I were mamma I would never go in debt for the least thing. And now, when I remember what a toilsome time we had of it all summer, I sometimes wonder whether the farm-hands here are any more tired than we used to be."

But Blanche could not be brought to look at matters with Flora's eyes. Her grief became less noisy, but was scarcely alleviated. Of course she must submit to circumstances which she could not alter, but this did not make them any the less disagreeable.

Her father left Brighton on the following morning, and had she dared Blanche would have gone with him, in open opposition to her mother.

But this could not be, and she found herself obliged to remain and make the best of it. It is not natural for one of her age to be perfectly miserable long, and presently she began to look around for something that might mitigate the misfortune. She was very vain, and her vanity required food: might she not find this in Brighton, after all? Even in this staid, old-fashioned community there must be some who could admire and appreciate style and accomplishments, and perhaps envy them. Then, too, it occurred to her that this might be the very spot of all others where the most admiration would probably be obtained, for she flattered herself that there could be no rivals here to divide attention. She determined therefore to make a general investigation of the contents of her wardrobe, and select the most becoming articles of dress, and then, by way of astonishing the country people with her accomplishments, she could use French phrases freely whenever she had the opportunity.

Flora, on the contrary, with surprising adaptation, seemed to be accommodating herself to the style of living in her uncle's house. She complained no more of having to be her own cham-

bermaid, but nearly every morning went the rounds with Lucy, going from room to room, and assisting her to make beds and dust furniture, with almost as much ease and good-humor as if she had been brought up to the business. In the kitchen, too, she began to feel equally at home, at her own desire taking lessons from her aunt in the art of baking, until at last she was allowed to make a cake without assistance, even to the icing. As she looked at this—to her—very wonderful achievement, I think she experienced quite as much happiness as she had ever felt upon mastering any fashionable accomplishment.

Every day, too, she was finding out in some way that her Brighton friends were not as deficient in polite literature as she had at first supposed. She was looking over the book-case one morning when her cousin John happened to be present, and in the course of her investigations came across some Latin volumes. She wondered whose they could be, and then recollecting what Willie had told her of their cousin Pierrepont, she made up her mind that he must be the owner. An involuntary feeling of curiosity possessed her to see the handwriting of one about whom she

had heard so much. She opened one of the books, a Latin Grammar, at the title-page, and to her surprise saw written in a bold, but boyish hand, "*John C. Morris.*" Still, John might have chosen to write his name in his brother's book. She took up a copy of Virgil, but here again was the same signature, in a firmer hand and over a more recent date. She turned to her cousin, who was reading a paper, and holding out the well-worn volumes, inquired,

"Are these your books, Cousin John?"

He looked up from his paper, and glancing towards them replied, simply,

"I believe so."

"How very strange!" she exclaimed, involuntarily. "And is it possible that you have studied Latin?"

"I have tried to do so," he returned, laconically.

"And have read Virgil?" she continued.

"Have tried to do so," he replied, in the same tone.

Then looking up at Flora's flushed and astonished countenance, he added, coolly,

"Very preposterous of me to make such an attempt—was it not?"

"Why no, I suppose not," she said, slowly; "it was my mistake; but I thought——"

Here she hesitated, very much at a loss how to finish the sentence. He did it for her.

"You thought," he said, "that a man who wears an old straw hat and follows the plough has no business with the classics?"

"I ought to have known better," she replied, recovering her composure; "I should have remembered Cincinnatus."

"No," he answered, smiling, "I decline any such comparison. Cincinnatus and I have nothing in common; and remembering him would not have thrown any light upon my movements. He was called from his plough to steer the ship of state safely through the breakers, and I rather think that I shall be allowed to remain quietly at mine for the rest of my life, which would certainly be the best thing for my country; for should I attempt any such lofty achievement it would prove a signal failure. My highest earthly aspirations at present are to do my duty as a good citizen and a good farmer."

Flora had no reply ready, but she muttered some rather complimentary words about his being

able to accomplish well whatever he might choose to undertake. Compliment was not much in Flora's line, but she was mortified at the mistake which she had made in failing to appreciate her cousin, and in allowing him to see that she had done so, and now she was desirous of making up for it if possible. With increasing confusion, and even pain, she remembered having once explained a simple Latin quotation which she had used inadvertently, and now she wondered very much what he must have thought of such a ridiculous and unwarrantable assumption of superiority on her part. There was nothing in his manner to show that he indulged in the same unfortunate recollections, or felt any resentment towards her on account of anything that might have happened in the past; but he seemed to understand the compliment as an intended peace-offering.

"Never mind, Cousin Flora," he said in his usual calm and quiet manner; "your mistake was a very natural one, after all; only please do not make a second and more unfortunate one by running into the opposite extreme, and attributing to me talents that I do not possess, merely because

I happened to have a slight knowledge of the Latin language. It is much more mortifying to find one's self overrated than underrated. The first is apt to remind one of his many deficiencies, while the other places one instantly upon the lofty pedestal of the martyr, and inspires him with an inward consciousness which is wonderful at enabling him to endure almost any amount of injustice."

Flora busied herself in replacing the volumes in the book-case, apparently too much engaged in having them all exactly even to return an answer; and after a few moments her cousin continued:

"Then, too, it is never fair, Flora, to judge of a person's character even by the amount of education which he has acquired. Knowledge is excellent in its way, yet something more than this is required to make one useful in the world; and the most valuable members of society are not always found among the most learned. We have men among us here, in Brighton, whose opportunities have been very limited, whom we could not easily spare. They have good common sense, good natural abilities, good principles, right views

of life, and the power of influencing others in the proper direction; and these qualifications are invaluable to a community. You remember, too, that our Saviour chose his disciples from among poor and unlearned fishermen; and the apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, said of those whom God had selected to do his work, 'For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God has chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise.' The brightest crowns in heaven may be worn by those upon whom the world would never have bestowed the smallest of its laurels."

Flora's power of speech here failed her entirely. Her cousin had entered upon a subject where she was not competent to give an opinion. The Bible was almost a sealed book to her; it was rarely mentioned in polite society at home, and never appealed to as a text-book in the manner in which she had heard it done in Brighton.

"Dear me!" she sighed to herself; "I must appear far more ignorant and benighted to the good people here than they do to me. All their

ideas are formed upon an entirely different basis from mine. But there is one thing that I am determined," she added, emphatically; "I will never assume any more airs of superiority in the presence of an inhabitant of Brighton. It does not pay, and only makes me appear ridiculous, I suppose, where I mean to be dignified. Then, too, I may find profound Latin scholars among those whom I have regarded as ignorant of the English language."

Flora was unconsciously beginning to adopt the Brighton standard of judgment, and it seemed strange to her that she had never before imagined that real, solid worth was to be found beneath a plain exterior. Her reflections were put to a sudden flight by the entrance of Willie, who came bounding in the room, followed by the dog.

"Why, Cousin John!" he exclaimed, "I have been looking for you everywhere. I did not expect to find you in the house, but Aunt Mary told me that you were here. Ezra Haines wants to see you about the potatoes—not those that are in the back field, but the early ones, over by the corn-field."

Willie's active mind had been taking in a won-

derful amount of agricultural knowledge since his arrival in Brighton, and now he could talk quite understandingly about matters that pertained to the farm.

John laid down the paper which he had resumed, and took out his watch, a large silver one which had once belonged to his grandfather. Then, expressing some surprise at the lateness of the hour, he went out in answer to the summons, leaving Flora to muse over the strange contrast between the society of Brighton and that to which she was accustomed at home.



CHAPTER VIII.

PIERREPONT MORRIS.

THE afternoon of the day upon which Pierrepont was expected home had come. He had formed almost the entire subject of conversation at breakfast and dinner; and in fact scarcely a single meal had passed since Blanche and Flora had reached Brighton during which his name had not been mentioned more than once. Blanche had said, with an air of disgust,

“I am tired and sick of the very name of Pierrepont.”

At first, Flora's sensations in this respect were similar to her sister's; but after hearing the absentee spoken of in equally high terms by others outside of the family circle, who could hardly be accused of partiality, she began to experience a feeling of curiosity to see him, which at length grew into interest. But now that the long-looked-



for time had arrived, with an instinctive perception that the first meeting with his family had better not be in the presence of strangers, she retired to her own room; yet, unable to resist the strong desire she had of seeing him, she seated herself at the window, where, concealed by the curtain, she could have a view of the front entrance.

She listened earnestly for the wheels of the vehicle, and presently was gratified by hearing them approach the gate. In a moment the whole household, who had been watching even more eagerly than herself, were collected upon the lawn. Willie was the first to alight from the carriage. He had not been troubled by any instinctive perceptions, and never once doubted his welcome to the seat which his cousin John offered. From the very first, Willie had made himself one of the family, and had now become completely identified with it. Closely following Willie, was a tall, slender figure, quick and graceful in movement. Flora could only catch a glimpse of the side face, which displayed an outline of regular features, somewhat resembling Lucy's, and dark brown hair. Her first impulse was to call Blanche, but upon second thoughts she decided not to do so,

as she had no desire to hear such disparaging remarks as Blanche would probably make. So she sat quietly looking down upon the warm and affectionate greetings which passed between the family and the newly arrived, impressed with the conviction that the love which was so abundantly lavished upon her cousin Pierrepont was not thrown away, as he seemed quite as glad to see his friends as they were to receive him.

Flora watched the group until they disappeared upon the piazza, and then fell into a very sombre sort of reverie. A feeling wonderfully akin to loneliness oppressed her, and a longing after sympathy. Her sister was but a few feet distant, in the same room, not yet awakened from her afternoon's nap; but Blanche, with her vain, selfish, and frivolous disposition, could scarcely be said to be a companion for any one. Flora was waking to the consciousness that it is possible to live for other objects than dress and fashion—that the chief end for which a human being is created might not, after all, be merely to appear to advantage in this world, and to enjoy its pleasures and vanities. Her uncle's family seemed to have entirely different aims in view, commencing just

where all her plans terminated—with the end of this life. They must regard her as a mere trifler, leading an idle, useless existence. Only one step more appeared to be required to take Flora into the right path, to bring her to see and acknowledge what she really needed—simple faith in God, and an earnest pleading for the direction of his Holy Spirit. Only one step forward to plant her feet upon firm ground, where alone she could find safety; but it was not taken, and she remained still standing upon the same dangerous platform. Her thoughts changed, and what commenced with dissatisfaction towards herself merged into a feeling of general discontent towards others. She experienced a strong disinclination to meet the family, she would be so much out of place among them; and now that Pierrepont had returned, they must all feel her to be in the way. If she could only go away somewhere, or render herself invisible for a time! But she could do neither, and the difficulty remained the same.

Her uneasy reflections were abruptly ended by the sudden opening of the door with a quick jerk, which could come from no other than Willie, that general disturber of the peace of the

household. She turned towards him, as he bounded into the room, and exclaimed,

“O Willie! how you have frightened me! I do wish you would learn to enter a room less noisily.”

Blanche jumped up hastily, with a startled look, now fully aroused from her slumber, and whined out an additional complaint; but both were lost upon Willie, who seemed to feel that it was his right to find fault upon this special occasion.

“Why, girls,” he cried out, “what are you doing up here? Cousin Pierrepont has come home, and he is such a splendid fellow! He can row boats, and swim, and he has caught sharks, and he knows all about the farm and everything else, and he has sailed on the Nile, and seen sphinxes, and been among Arabs and up mountains, and in a volcano. I tell you he is a regular——”

Willie hesitated. The term which he considered most expressive, and which he was accustomed to bestow upon those whom he admired most, seemed hardly fitted for his cousin Pierrepont, who had inspired him already with a large amount of respect.

"What in the world is Willie talking about? I am sure I cannot understand him," complained Blanche, whose brain was just then in a very confused state.

"Do you mean a brick, or a trump, which, Willie?" inquired Flora, perfectly familiar with her brother's ordinary expressions, and trying to suppress a smile at his hesitancy.

"Oh, I don't know," replied Willie, with a perplexed air. "Pierrepont is really splendid, but somehow he does not seem like other people."

"But what about his going to be a clergyman?" questioned Flora. "You remember that you complained about that only a few days ago?"

"He did not say anything about it himself," replied Willie; "and then, you see, I did not know about the Arabs and the shark, and what a fine fellow he was. But you had better hurry and come down and see him for yourselves," he added, bounding out of the room about as rapidly as he had entered it.

"Do please tell me what Willie means?" insisted Blanche. "Pierrepont Morris has come home, which I can understand; but what has that to do with Arabs and volcanos?"

"You know," Flora answered, "that this admirable cousin of ours spent a year or more abroad, traveling with a clergyman, a professor in college and an old friend of the family."

Blanche disclaimed any such knowledge, and Flora went on :

"I supposed, of course, that you knew all about it, for I have often talked it over with Lucy. Pierrepont was very much out of health; he studied too hard, I believe; and the doctors thought that traveling would be of benefit; and that is why he went."

"Did he spend any time in Paris?" inquired Blanche.

"Oh, of course," Flora answered; "he must have remained there for several weeks, from what Lucy told me of his sight-seeing."

"I shall ask him about the Empress Eugenie's hair," returned Blanche—"whether it is not the same shade as mine. Helen Roscoe said it was not, and Mr. La Farge, that elegant-looking French gentleman whom we met at Niagara, assured me that it was exactly the same. Then, too I must ask him about her style, for—"

"I'll beg of you, Blanche," hastily inter-

rupted her sister, "to confine your questionings to the Arabs and the Dutch, and let the Empress Eugenie alone."

"What a ridiculous suggestion, Flora!" replied Blanche. "The Arabs are barbarians, and I abominate the Dutch, who are no better."

"Some of our friends at home," returned Flora, "would no doubt be much gratified by your last remark. Lena Hoffman, for instance, who prides herself upon her Knickerbocker blood."

"You are too provoking, Flora," said Blanche; "you take exception to everything I say."

Flora's reply was interrupted by a gentle knocking at the door, followed by the entrance of her cousin Lucy.

"I thought," she said, "that you might not know that brother Pierre had arrived, and I came to tell you of it."

"I knew that he was here," Flora answered, somewhat hesitatingly; "but as he had been absent so long, and I supposed that you must have a great deal to say to each other, I thought it might be more agreeable to you to have him all to yourselves for the first few hours, without being troubled by strangers."

“You were very considerate, Cousin Flora,” replied Lucy, “but very much mistaken. You know that you are not strangers, and that we all are of one family now. Then, too, we have spoken of you so often in our letters that Pierre is quite anxious to know you.”

The answer was very simple in itself, but there was a kindliness in Lucy's manner which quite put to flight the fancies about being in the way which had disturbed Flora's imagination. She responded to it with one of her most expressive smiles, immediately commenced giving the few necessary additional touches to her dress, and when these were finished offered to assist Blanche, who was making quite an elaborate toilet. Lucy waited patiently until both were ready, and then the three girls went down together. They found their cousin Pierrepont at the foot of the stairway waiting to receive them. He did not pause for an introduction, but met them with such perfect ease and cordiality as instantly placed them upon the friendly footing of near relatives.

With a spirit of opposition, such as one is inclined sometimes to feel towards those whom every one else seems bent upon praising, fostered

by the unpleasant fact of finding superiors where she had expected to meet with inferiors, Flora had determined to make her cousin Pierrepont the object of her most unmerciful criticism. But his friendliness had quite disarmed her; the evil spirit was exorcised, and she was inclined to regard him with entirely different feelings. She had looked upon him as the peculiar property of his own family first, and then of Brighton generally—son and brother to the one, and companion and friend to the other—a stranger to herself, and one in whom she had no claim or proprietorship. Now, on the contrary, he was her cousin—a very near connection, and one whose virtues were to be acknowledged and praised, and whose faults were to be sacredly obscured from the eyes of the world.



CHAPTER IX.

A BRIGHTON PIC-NIC.

THE arrival of Pierrepont Morris seemed to be a signal for the commencement of a series of festivities peculiar to Brighton. First of all, the long projected pic-nic was to take place. Thursday was set apart for it, partly because there was no church meeting held upon that evening; and for days beforehand great preparations were made for the grand event. Calls were constantly being exchanged between the various members of the committee, for the purpose of ascertaining what portion of the feast each person would contribute; and Flora could not but admire the readiness with which those who were able to afford it taxed themselves for the most expensive articles. Every one furnished something towards the common stock, and none felt that they were unwelcome. She had caught the spirit of the thing,

and grew quite interested in hearing of cakes and pies, canned fruit, tongue, à la mode beef, &c. Blanche came to her on Wednesday morning with a complaint.

"I have had my doubts, Flora, all along," she said, "as to whether we ought to go to this pic-nic, and now I am convinced that we ought not."

"What is the matter with the pic-nic?" inquired Flora.

"Only this," replied Blanche—"that it will not be at all select, even for Brighton. All sorts of people seem to be going, even those Adamses; and I do not think we ought to mix in with such a crowd."

"I do not care who may be going," returned Flora. "I have made up my mind to go, and to enjoy myself, too; and now it would take more than the whole family of the Adamses to keep me away."

Blanche was completely nonplussed. Flora seemed to be retrograding in the social scale as fast as Willie, and she was powerless to hold them back. What should she do? After having entered her protest, she felt as if she ought to

show her disapprobation by absenting herself from the pic-nic. This appeared to be the only proper and consistent course for her to take, but yet there were objections to it. It would be extremely unpleasant and lonely to stay at home all day, while the rest of the young people were abroad enjoying themselves. Then what would her aunt say to such a proceeding? She would not dare to plead the real cause to one who would not only fail to appreciate it, but would not hesitate to condemn it. She was turning the matter over in her mind, trying to see her way through the difficulty, when Flora again spoke:

“You had better go, too, Blanche. You need not keep company with those whom you do not like, for there will be plenty of others to talk to. In fact, I do not see what else you can do, without giving offence—Aunt Mary is such a decided enemy to exclusiveness, and she has a wonderful talent at putting down nonsense.”

Blanche muttered something about there being no nonsense in the matter.

“Of course, my dear,” continued Flora, “you would not regard it as nonsense, but the proba-

bilities are that she would. You know that you and she differ widely upon most subjects."

Blanche hesitated and demurred, and finally said she would see about it, which Flora understood to be equivalent to an assent, and she felt that she had gained her point.

The heavens were watched most observantly on Wednesday evening, and the knowing ones predicted clear weather for the following day; and the morning verified their predictions. Flora awoke to find the sun shining brightly through her windows, and her heart rejoiced with the birds. She selected from her wardrobe a dress of plain material and of strong texture, that would not easily be torn. Blanche, on the contrary, laid out a bright, airy-looking garment, better adapted to the ballroom than the woods.

"Why, Blanche!" exclaimed Flora, "I should think you might find some more suitable dress to wear than that silk organdie. A few blackberry briars would soon put an end to it."

"I am not going among blackberry bushes," Blanche answered; "and if I must attend this pic-nic, I shall do it as genteelly as possible.

There is no need that I should make a fright of myself to please the Brighton people."

"I did not suggest the change of dress as a special favor to the inhabitants of Brighton, but upon your own account," responded Flora.

"I can take care of myself, thank you," retorted Blanche, sharply.

After this speech Flora at first concluded to let her sister wear what dress she chose, and suffer the consequence of her folly; but upon second thoughts she could not quite make up her mind to let her make herself ridiculous in the eyes of others, without another effort to prevent it.

"Blanche," she said, persuasively, after a short pause, "I think it would be a great pity to ruin such a handsome dress as that, merely for the sake of wearing it once; and even if it should not get spoiled, after having it on all day long, and everybody seeing so much of it, you will hardly feel like wearing it of an evening. It looks so much better of an evening, too."

Blanche did not answer, but her countenance showed signs of relenting, and Flora was encouraged to persevere.

"Now there is that grenadine with the blue

spot," she continued ; "it is quite as becoming to you for daylight, but does not look so well of an evening : and then it is much tougher and not so expensive."

Blanche demurred a while, but finally consented. The organdie was replaced in the wardrobe, the grenadine with the blue spot was brought out, and Flora had gained her point in this second instance. It was perfectly natural that she should be elated with the success, and that the feeling should find vent for itself. This was one of the bright days of her life, and she skipped over the room with a light tread, occasionally humming a tune or bursting out in snatches of some merry song. Blanche, on the contrary, did not feel so happy as her sister ; and when one is in an ill-humor it is sometimes very annoying to find others inclined to be jovial.

"Well, Flora," she said, "I should think you must have changed your mind very materially of late. When you first came to this place you said you were going to jump into the pond in preference to staying here. How soon is the performance to come off?"

"I gave up that idea long ago as an utter impossibility," returned Flora, quite coolly.

"There is enough water in the pond to drown you, if you choose to try it," retorted Blanche.

"Oh, yes! I dare say the water is all right," replied Flora; "the difficulty rests entirely with Nero. He is an insurmountable obstacle. Willie told me some time ago that he positively prohibits the ducks from swimming. They march resolutely down to the pond and very determinedly step into it; but Nero keeps a sharp lookout, and as soon as they are fairly upon the water he is impressed with the idea that they are drowning, and rushing frantically in seizes one after another of the poor creatures, and throws them upon the land before they have time for even one quack of remonstrance. They soon learn to keep out of the pond when he is in the neighborhood; and I have concluded to profit by their experience, in preference to experimenting on my own account. You must see for yourself, Blanche, that it would never do for me to be hauled out dripping in that style. It may not be so very objectionable for ducks, but it would be extremely indecorous for me to be held up as a spectacle, with

my clothes all draggled with mud and water. It would quite destroy all the romance, which is the only charm of such a tragedy. Ugh! the very thought makes me shudder."

"Your eyes ought to be sharper than those of the ducks," Blanche answered; "and I have no doubt that you can find abundant opportunity of jumping into the pond when Nero is busy upon some distant part of the farm."

"Well, yes, I suppose I might," returned Flora, slowly and thoughtfully, "if I did not happen to have another and still stronger reason, which is a decided antipathy to drowning myself at all. I have come to the conclusion that Brighton is not so very bad after all, and I think I shall be able to pass the holidays here very comfortably."

"There is no accounting for tastes," Blanche replied.

"Speaking of tastes," said Flora, "reminds me of breakfast, to which I have no doubt I shall be able to do ample justice. And there is the breakfast-bell, which I am not sorry to hear."

The pic-nic party was to be very general, comprising not only the young people, but many

heads of families, among whom were Mr. and Mrs. Morris. The work of preparation was quite exciting. Baskets of almost every description were packed with provisions, spoons, forks, dishes, table-cloths and napkins. The carriage and farm-wagon were both called into requisition, and at about nine o'clock all was ready for departure. But a sudden fear took possession of Blanche. Suppose some burglar, knowing of their absence, should take advantage of this opportunity to rob the dwelling. She had various valuable articles of jewelry which she would be sorry to lose, besides the contents of her wardrobe, which would be difficult to replace. Bolts and locks were seldom fastened in Brighton, and Jemima, being in the back kitchen, could hear but little of what might be going on in the front part of the house. She mentioned her fears to her uncle.

"Do not trouble yourself on this subject," he replied. "We have never yet had a robbery occur in Brighton or its vicinity, and it seems scarcely likely that one should be gotten up for your especial benefit."

"Nor a murder," added his wife.

Flora expressed surprise at this wonderfully delightful state of affairs, and contrasted it with the condition of things in the city, where such events were almost of everyday occurrence.

"I scarcely know how I should manage to live in a place where I should have the fear of robbers constantly before me," said Mrs. Morris.

Blanche was quieted, but her uneasiness was not removed. She had far less faith in the purity of the Brighton people than had those who knew them better; and then, too, she was suffering from another source of anxiety. She would probably get tired long before the day would be over, and where should she find a place of rest? Besides, she felt no disposition to remain out in the open air, exposed to sun and wind all the time, until face and hands should be tanned to the vulgar shade which she detested.

"I suppose there is a hotel of some sort near to where we are going," she said.

"No, there is nothing of the kind," her uncle replied. "You may travel a number of miles in that direction without finding a single place where liquor is sold. But of course, Blanche," he continued, smiling, "your concern on this subject

cannot arise from a desire to imbibe anything stronger than such drinks as we have brought with us."

Blanche disclaimed any such inclination, and only plead guilty to the desire of finding a place to rest if she should grow tired.

"We have arranged for all that," Mrs. Morris answered. "Aunt Betsey Moore has a house on the outskirts of the woods, where we shall all be sure of finding a hearty welcome. It is not very grand either in its dimensions or furniture, but it is sufficiently large for our purpose, and everything there is neat and comfortable."

Blanche wanted very much to inquire who Aunt Betsey Moore was? and whether there could be any tie of relationship existing between herself and this person? But she hesitated, for she had learned to be very cautious about making inquiries of her aunt. Flora, on the contrary, felt no scruple in asking any question that occurred to her.

"Who is this Aunt Betsey Moore, Aunt Mary?" she inquired. "Is she a relation of mine?"

"Probably not," replied her aunt; "but she is related or connected with nearly half of the in-

habitants of Brighton, and so we all claim her under the title of aunt. She is quite a wonderful person in her way. Although over eighty years of age, somewhat feeble in body, she is active and energetic in mind, and takes as much interest in affairs generally as if she had not counted half that number of years."

"Who lives with her?" Flora asked.

"Her daughter, and two grandsons who attend to the farming," replied her aunt.

All this time they were driving slowly over a beautifully varied country. Now they were passing through the woods, over a road so seldom used that their progress was constantly impeded by the branches of the trees. Then they would emerge upon an open plain, where they could catch bright glimpses of the deep blue sea; and again they would be toiling over a succession of small hills in a rolling meadow country. Here and there, too, from an elevation they would overlook a space of moist ground, bearing a strong resemblance to a well laid out and highly cultivated garden. Wild flowers of brilliant shades and luxuriant growth bloomed profusely in patches of varied size and form, but all shaped

with as much precision as if they had been arranged by the hands of a skillful gardener. Occasionally, too, they would see ponds whose surface would be thickly covered with the pure white water-lily.

Flora was in a state of ecstasy. Sometimes she would give vent to her feelings by enthusiastic expressions of admiration, and again, under the influence of a sensation too deep for words, she would lean back in the carriage and sit gazing silently upon the beautiful prospect. In her own way she enjoyed it all very much, and yet there was a higher degree of happiness to be obtained from these scenes than that of which her mind was capable. It may afford us great pleasure to look upon a wonderful piece of mechanism, perfect in its symmetry and design, even if it should be the work of a stranger. But how much higher will be our appreciation of it if it has been planned and executed by our father, whom we love and reverence above all others! We look upon it not only as a proof of the genius and skill of the maker, but also as giving evidence of his pure and loving nature, that has striven to benefit the heart as well as please the eye. In

looking over the beauties so lavishly spread around her, Flora saw no traces of the hand of Him from whom cometh every good and every perfect gift, nor was the the slightest feeling of gratitude blended with the enjoyment which she experienced.

In the course of the drive they saw various other vehicles, all upon the same errand as themselves. The faces of some of the occupants were familiar, but there were many others that were entirely strange. Among the former Flora recognized Mr. Lambert and family, Mrs. Edmonds with her son and two daughters, the Nortons, and Mr. Carter with his sister—Mr. Edmonds taking sole charge of the store in the absence of his clerk. It was more than an hour before they reached the place which had been selected for the pic-nic. It was a smooth piece of woods in the neighborhood of the bay, where the fishing was good, and where boats could be procured for those who fancied rowing. The Morris party drove immediately to the house of Aunt Betsey Moore, anxious to pay their respects first to the old lady, and to make some arrangements with her daughter about that portion of the entertainment

which she was to supply, and for which Mr. Morris intended amply to repay her. The dwelling was of a description with which Blanche and Flora were becoming quite familiar—a low, one-storied building, whose unpainted boards had become brown by exposure to sun, wind and rain, and whose overhanging eaves were ornamented by a covering of rich green moss. The little garden was very brilliant with a variety of flowers, among which the hollyhock was most conspicuous; and presented a striking contrast to the interior of the house, where there were none but the necessary articles of furniture, and these all of the plainest possible description.

The visitors were all warmly welcomed, but Pierrepont, having been away at college, received the largest amount of attention; and Flora was particularly struck by his behavior towards these very humble friends. If old Aunt Betsey had been the highest lady in the land, he could not have been more polite and deferential in his manner towards her, he was so gentle in his demeanor and so considerate of her comfort. He drew her chair out of the way of a streak of sunlight which might have annoyed her, lifted



the cushion, which had fallen to the floor when she arose to meet him, arranged it in its proper place and insisted upon her being seated, lest she should be tired. All this was done very quietly, and without the least attempt at display. Then he stood patiently beside her, answering the trifling questions which she chose to ask, as fully and pleasantly as if she had been some kind patroness to whom he owed an unlimited amount of respect and gratitude. There was some little danger that the old lady might forget that he had any more pressing engagements than conversation with herself; but this was prevented by her grandson calling Pierrepont out to attend to some matter pertaining to the unlading of the provisions. He left her with a polite apology for his abruptness, and a promise of seeing her again and having a good long talk before the close of the day.

There was much real enjoyment in the pic-nic party. Every one seemed to have left home with the determination to be happy if possible, and when this is the case success is almost sure to follow. It was a picturesque and pleasant sight, even for one who was only an observer. Here and there groups were scattered, employing the

time according to their different tastes. Some in boats upon the beautiful bay, some fishing, some walking through the woods and upon the beach, and others seated upon logs or trees or fragments of rock, engaged in earnest conversation. Flora appeared to be quite in her element, and equally disposed to enjoy every form of amusement. She spent one hour in boating, and enjoyed it vastly; then she tried fishing, which was rather less to her fancy; then she joined a party who were picking up shells upon the beach; and when this last fancy had exhausted itself, she walked through the woods with her cousin Pierrepont, Mary and Helen Edmonds, and two or three other young people. Pierrepont was very entertaining. He possessed an uncommon talent at description and was admirable in telling stories, going into them with such zest and enthusiasm as to carry his listeners into the very midst of the scenes which he was describing. Helen Edmonds asked a question of his travels, which led him to give an account of a forced entrance which he made into one of the ancient cities of Palestine. He saw a few wretched houses, perched upon a steep rock, and surrounded by an old, crumbling

wall. The guide pointed this out as Gibeah of Saul, and he instantly determined to see something more of the old city, whose name had been familiar to him from his childhood. The guide and his fellow-travelers objected to the attempt; the rocks seemed almost inaccessible from this point, and the view from where they stood was regarded as sufficient for their purpose. But Pierrepont's curiosity was excited, and he remained resolute in his determination. It was probably the only opportunity he should ever have of exploring this ancient place, and he would not willingly lose it. Begging them to slacken their pace, and promising not to detain them long, he instantly started off without waiting to hear any further remonstrance. With some little difficulty he managed to scale the ascent, but here his way was obstructed by the wall. The broken soil was giving away beneath his mule's feet; it was impossible to go backward; he must go forward at whatever cost. For one moment he looked at the rude barrier crumbling with age, and then, urging the animal to one more reckless plunge, he was on the other side, with no more serious accident than the

breaking out of a few loose stones from the wall. Yet here a more formidable difficulty arose, for he found himself in the very midst of a wild-looking crew of human beings, of almost every age and size, all clamorously demanding "buck-sheesh." The case was growing desperate, and he saw new dangers springing up before him. The crowd looked threateningly upon him, as if ready to tear him to pieces if he should refuse their request. At the very best they would detain him, and in this way he might lose his companions. He might be arrested for injury done to the wall, and how should he ever manage to defend himself under such circumstances? If he should pour out the entire contents of his purse, it would not serve to satisfy one-half of the demands made upon it, and would probably only serve to make matters worse by giving offence to those whose desires it would fail to meet. Immediate flight was his only hope of safety; and this could not be easily accomplished with these rude creatures pressing closely upon him, holding on to the mule or some portion of his dress, and chattering a loud, continuous jargon that not only deafened his ears, but almost seemed to de-

prive him of the power of reasoning. With the sudden and desperate impulse of one whose life is in danger, he took out his pistol and pointed it towards the motley crowd, threatening to fire among them if they did not instantly release him. This unexpected movement served to intimidate them for the moment, and taking advantage of the favorable opportunity, he spurred on his frightened mule and started forward. The crowd followed, crying wildly as before, but he had gained the vantage-ground, and was determined not to lose it. Perceiving an opening in the wall just before him, he passed through it, plunging rapidly down the mountain side until he reached the spot where his companions waited for him. Here he breathed freely, but it was some minutes before he succeeded in his efforts to narrate his escape.

While these events were transpiring it had never once occurred to him that there could be anything ludicrous connected with them; but now, when he had finished the recital, he laughed very heartily as he remembered the very comical appearance which these Gibeahites presented.

The young ladies were very much interested, and

begged for other stories. Flora recollected his promise to Aunt Betsey, and expected that Pierrepont would excuse himself upon this ground and return immediately to the house. But she was mistaken. His enthusiasm seemed now to be fully aroused, and he went on delighting his hearers for nearly two hours longer. At first, Flora was pleased with this, for she thought that she should never tire of listening to him; but after a while, as the time passed on, she experienced a feeling of disappointment. The breaking of a promise to an old woman in Aunt Betsey Moore's position would have seemed but a trifle to her and scarcely deserving of notice, if performed by one of her own gay associates at home. But she had expected better things from Pierrepont, who had seemed so very good that she had regarded him as quite perfect; and now she sighed over her mistake.

Flora was right, for Pierrepont Morris was not perfect. He was a devoted Christian, loving God fervently, and earnestly striving to serve Him with a perfect heart and a willing mind, and giving evidence of this by a zeal which could not be mistaken. But he was not free from

human imperfections, and was still subject to like passions with others, and obliged to fight daily and resolutely against his own evil tendencies; and never successfully, except when he put on the whole armor of God. In his extreme amiability and desire to give all the happiness which he could, he was very ready to make promises that were sometimes unfortunately forgotten. The fault arose, not from the readiness to make the promises, but from the tendency to forget them. So now he reclined against a tree enjoying himself and entertaining his young audience, entirely regardless of the disappointment which he was inflicting upon the poor old lady whose earthly enjoyments were so few, and who was waiting so anxiously for him. Something, however, at last served to remind him of his promise—a trifling thought which seemed to have no connection whatever with the subject, and which occurred in the midst of a description which he was giving of Capua. He paused and consulted his watch.

“I had no idea,” he said, “that the hours were passing so rapidly. I promised Aunt Betsey to spend a good deal of time with her to-day, but I

shall not be able to redeem my promise entirely. Fifteen minutes is the very most that I can spare to her now. I am very sorry, for I fear that she will be disappointed. Ah! well, it is too late to remedy the matter this time, and I must try to do better in the future."

"Oh! never mind Aunt Betsey," urged Helen; "she has given you up by this time, and an explanation will be all-sufficient."

"No, no, Helen," he replied; "please do not offer me any assistance on the wrong road. I can go fast enough in that direction of myself, and I only need help in getting back upon the right track. So, good-bye, young ladies; I am sorry to leave you, but it cannot be avoided."

The girls watched his retreating figure, as he moved rapidly in the direction of the house, for a few moments, and then sauntered over to where a group of young people were holding a conversation at a short distance. Among these were Blanche and Mr. Frank Carter. There was something in the appearance of the two which Flora did not altogether like. Blanche seemed to be in an uncommonly loquacious mood for her. She was looking very patronizingly upon her

companion, while his face wore a mischievous expression which to Flora's eye boded no good. He had evidently found out her sister's weak points, and was drawing her out for the purpose of amusing himself at her expense. The first words that she heard was a question from him :

"What was the name you just now used, Miss Blanche?"

"Shakespeare," she repeated, and then went on flippantly: "Shakespeare, you know, was an English poet, who lived many years ago. He wrote plays, too, that have been performed at the theatre."

"Are you sure that he was born in England?" continued her interrogator; "perhaps it was in Ireland or Scotland. It seems to me that I have heard of him somewhere."

Blanche hesitated, and her face wore a perplexed look. Her knowledge of history and geography was rather limited, and her mind became confused. That Ireland and Scotland, with England, helped to form the kingdom of Great Britian, she was certain, and she also remembered the name Avon as connected with the birth-place of the great poet. But might she not

be mistaken as to Avon being in England? She tried to think, but only grew the more perplexed. Still, she was pretty sure Shakespeare really was an Englishman; her companion was waiting for her answer, and it would never do to plead ignorance while asserting her claim of superiority.

"Oh, yes," she said; "he must have been English, for the Irish and Scotch are such rude people that I do not believe they could write plays fit for a refined audience."

"Of course," he replied, with a well-assumed air of deference, "you ought to know better than I; but, by the way, was there not a man named Sir Walter something—"

Flora saw a gleam of amusement in Helen Edmonds' eye, and could bear it no longer.

"Blanche!" she cried, so sharply and quickly as instantly to attract her sister's attention, "do you know that snakes choose for their nests just such logs as that upon which you are sitting?"

Blanche jumped up hastily with the startled look of one in danger, and Mr. Carter hastened to assure her that there was no real cause for alarm, and begged of her to be seated. But Flora, having succeeded in breaking the thread of

the discourse, had no intention of allowing it to be taken up again.

"It is scarcely worth while to sit down," she said, "for it will very soon be time for us to take our departure, and I think we had better begin our preparations."

The little group started forward, and Flora by a dexterous movement contrived to make Blanche the companion of gentle, amiable Mary Edmonds, while she took upon herself the entertainment of Frank Carter. The young gentleman had sufficient penetration to understand her motive for this arrangement, and felt rather ashamed of the part which he had been acting, although trying to excuse his behaviour under the plea that he was only defending himself against the battery of contempt which Blanche was freely pouring upon himself and friends. He looked rather more subdued than usual, and seemed at a loss what to say. A ground squirrel made its appearance just in advance of them, and he instantly directed Flora's attention to it. But the little creature vanished from sight, leaving him in the same quandary as before. Then, drawn on by that peculiar magnetism which sometimes tempts a

fugitive into the very danger from which he is striving to escape, he inquired,

“Are you fond of the Waverley novels, Miss Flora?”

Flora hesitated for a few moments before returning an answer. She meant to collect all her forces to meet her sister's adversary, determined, if possible, to be the conqueror this time herself.

“I do not believe, Mr. Carter,” she said, slowly, “that you are so very anxious to know whether I like Sir Walter Scott's stories but that you can wait for the information until some other opportunity; and, as you have been acting the part of questioner so long, I think you must allow me to take your place now. Will you please tell me whether it is considered gentlemanly and polite, in Brighton, to amuse one's self with the weak points of visitors, for the purpose of turning them into ridicule?”

It was now Mr. Carter's turn to color and become confused.

“You are a stern questioner for so young a person, Miss Flora,” he said, “and one whom it will be very hard to answer. I may have behaved

badly, but you must acknowledge that I had strong temptation."

"Perhaps so," she replied; "but then, you know, that the stronger the temptation, the greater the merit of resisting it."

They walked on in silence for a while. Flora was wondering at her own boldness and ability in defending her sister. Although younger, she was the stronger of the two, and had often been called upon to act as champion for Blanche, and her qualification for the post had been developing rapidly of late. Mr. Carter was busily engaged in discussing a point between his conscience and his pride; but they were now already in sight of the rest of the party, and the discussion must be brought to a hasty conclusion, and this time it was in favor of conscience.

"Miss Flora," he said, in a subdued tone, "I confess to having done wrong. I have acted in a way that would not be regarded as gentlemanly or polite, either in Brighton or any other civilized portion of the world. I only thought I was teaching your sister a lesson; but I find that I, myself, had forgotten a very important one."

"Well," returned Flora, frankly and pleasantly,

"I believe there is always hope of improvement where one is conscious of their need of it."

She had barely finished speaking, when they were met by Lucy and a young companion, who announced that, previous to returning home, it had been decided that there should be a brief religious service held in the grove back of Aunt Betsey's cottage, under the direction of Mr. Lambert—a sort of joint family worship for the whole party. Owing to her infirmities, the old lady had not been able to attend church for several years, and it was a great privilege to her to hear the clergyman's voice and to join in worship with the people of God.

This arrangement seemed to be perfectly natural and satisfactory to all, even the youngest and liveliest of the assembly; for, with them, religion was not kept back to be brought forward only upon the Sabbath and upon occasions of sickness or death. They had been taught to regard, according to its practical meaning, the command: "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Flora, in her utter ignorance of the nature of true religion, was inclined to question the propriety of


such proceedings, while Blanche was disgusted and annoyed. Yet there was no help for it, and both moved forward with the crowd, impelled by the force of circumstances; Flora, feeling somewhat curious to see how the affair would be conducted, and Blanche only anxious to have it over.

Aunt Betsey was seated upon her chair at the open window, and beside it, on the outside, stood Mr. Lambert, with Bible and hymn-book, and near to him Pierrepont Morris, whom the old lady wanted to have in sight as long as possible. A hymn was sung, whose words and tune were familiar to all. Signor Ricordi might have produced more scientific music, but nothing as effective or heartfelt. Then, Mr. Lambert read the ninety-first Psalm, and offered a prayer; after which followed another hymn, sung with as much emphasis as the first; then, Mr. Lambert made a few appropriate remarks, and finished by calling upon Mr. Morris to lead in prayer. The services were closed with the long metre doxology.

The party reached their homes just as the moon was rising, after having passed a pleasant and not unprofitable day.

CHAPTER X.

QUESTIONS OF CONSCIENCE.

RS. WILLIAM MORRIS wrote frequently to her daughters from the different places where she sojourned ; giving such glowing accounts of hops, fancy balls, and masquerades as served to keep Blanche in a constant state of disquietude at what she was pleased to term the slowness of Brighton. "I am merely existing here," she said, in answer to one of her mother's letters, "and if it were not for looking forward to the winter, I am certain that I could not endure it." When she expressed herself in this way to Flora, which she did quite frequently, Flora was not concerned on her account, believing the distress to exist more in imagination than reality ; but she rarely disputed a point with Blanche, knowing the uselessness of such a contest. Willie's opinion still remained altogether favorable to

Brighton, and he openly declared that he had never spent his holidays so agreeably. As to Flora, herself, there were times when she was conscious of a craving after the fashionable amusements which her mother described, and when the social restraints of Brighton were irksome to her; but this was not her general experience. Very frequently she would congratulate herself upon the rational happiness which she was now enjoying, when compared with the feverish excitement, envyings, and slights which had marked her previous summers. Her fancy for novelty was every day being gratified by some new and strange development on the part of her Brighton friends. She was walking with her cousin Pierrepont, upon one occasion, when the conversation turned upon music, and she asked him what opera houses he had been in while abroad.

“None,” he replied.

“What!” she exclaimed; “you certainly did not leave Naples without having been in San Carlo?”

“Yes,” he repeated, smiling, “I certainly left Naples without having entered San Carlo.”

"And were you never at a theatre or opera house in Paris?" she inquired, in surprise.

"Never," he replied.

"Why, they have such splendid theatres abroad!" she exclaimed; "and San Carlo is so perfectly magnificent for the purpose!"

"Very probably," he answered, quite coolly, "but my taste does not lie in that line."

"I had rather stay at home than go abroad and mope," said Flora, very decidedly.

"But I do not think I did mope," replied Pierrepont, with a comical expression; "I was a little homesick once or twice, but I did not call that moping."

Flora smiled in spite of herself. There was something almost ludicrous in the idea of attributing to Pierrepont a disposition to mope—he was always so sprightly, had such a keen enjoyment of life, was so actively engaged in the present, and so full of plans for the future.

"I did not mean moping," she said, by way of apology, "but not looking at what was worth seeing."

"But I did look at a great many things that were worth seeing," he answered. "I looked

with deep interest into Westminster Abbey and the Milan Cathedral; at St. Peter's and the Coliseum, and many other very important buildings. But the tastes of all do not lie in the same line. Let me explain my meaning. There was a gentleman whom we met in Italy whose fancy seemed to be entirely for old bones and relics. He went out of his way to see the skeleton of a poor fellow who, centuries ago, had been built up between two walls. He was delighted with the hideous remains of St. Charles Borromeo, decked out with sparkling jewels; enjoyed groping through the Catacombs more than a drive upon the Pincian Hill, and paid money for the privilege of looking down into a deep burial vault in Naples, where the bodies of the poor were lying in various stages of decomposition."

"But, Cousin Pierrepont," said Flora, "you should not compare such disgusting sights with the opera and theatre, where all is so full of life and brilliancy and beauty."

Pierrepont thought of those whom the Saviour had denounced as "whited sepulchres, full of dead men's bones, and all manner of uncleanness." Not that there was anything peculiarly

pharisaic in theatrical performances; it was only in the nature of their influence that the similitude lay. What a variety of temptations were lurking around these places of amusement, in the form of nets spread out to entrap the unwary, and to how many had the entrance to them proved to be but the going down into the chambers of death! But he did not allude to these reflections to Flora, knowing that she would not be able to appreciate them.

"I referred to the difference of tastes," he said, "to explain to you that although some people might find pleasure in visiting the theatre, *I* should not. You will, perhaps, charge me with being as devoid of proper taste as the gentleman of whom I spoke, when I tell you that I enjoyed a quiet little prayer meeting, which I attended at Jerusalem with a few friends, more than I could have done the most brilliant performance at San Carlo."

Flora's countenance expressed the surprise which she could not speak.

"I see I am falling sadly in your estimation, Cousin Flora," he said, "and perhaps before we are through I may find myself even lower still;

but I want to be perfectly frank with you, and must suffer the consequence. My disinclination for the theatre is founded entirely upon principle. I feel that in entering its doors I should be doing wrong. I could not do this thing and sin against God. Even if I should go to such a place in open opposition to my sense of duty, the knowledge that I was offending against a holy God would make me miserable and quite prevent my enjoying the performance."

This last speech did not in the least tend to lessen Flora's astonishment.

"I know," she said, after a short pause, "that it would not be considered exactly right for a clergyman who is preaching and has a congregation to go to the theatre at home; but for one who, like you, is only a student, and abroad among strangers, I cannot see the slightest harm in it."

They had taken a seat at the roadside, upon a rude bench put up by the villagers for the convenience of pedestrians. Pierrepont reached over, and, breaking off a clover blossom, began to dissect it, making a close observation of every tiny little flower which composed the whole.

Flora misinterpreted his silence. She jumped to the hasty conclusion that she had already convinced him that he had been mistaken, and was about to continue the subject according to her own ideas, when he interrupted her with the question,

“On what principle would it be wrong for a clergyman at home, having charge of a congregation, to attend a theatrical or operatic performance?”

The inquiry came out unexpectedly, and Flora was not prepared to reply to it. Ever since she had thought of the matter at all she had regarded it as wrong for a clergyman to do this thing, which would be perfectly innocent for his people, but she had never thought of looking for a reason.

“I presume,” she said, hesitatingly, “that it must be on account of the peculiarly sacred office of a clergyman, and because he ought to set a good example to the people.”

“I cannot understand your mode of reasoning, Cousin Flora,” he replied. “You think that it is not wrong for persons generally to go to the theatre, and yet you say that one of the reasons

why a clergyman ought not to do so is because it would be setting a bad example to his congregation. If it is right for them to go, how can he possibly injure them by leading the way?"

"I think that I might do many things which it would be very wrong for a clergyman to do," she said.

"Perhaps so," he replied, "although the Bible does not draw any such distinctions as to who are to obey the laws which it lays down. For instance, it is not clergymen alone, but all, who are commanded, 'Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.'"

Flora was not sufficiently acquainted with the precepts of the Bible to attempt to argue about them, but she had heard a great deal said about the duty of professors of religion generally, and clergymen in particular.

"Clergymen ought to be very good men," she reasoned.

"I agree entirely with you there," he answered; "they ought to strive earnestly to follow the example of our Saviour—aiming to be perfect, even

as our Father in heaven is perfect. But so ought every one else. All the creatures of God are bound by the same laws, and there are none exempted, so far as I can remember."

"Yes," she said, hesitatingly; "I suppose everybody ought to try to be as good as they can."

There was another pause, during which Pierrepont dissected and closely examined a second clover blossom; and by the time he had finished his investigations Flora was ready with a question:

"Do you think it wicked to go to card or dancing parties?"

"Do you mean for clergymen, or for yourself?" he inquired.

"I did not refer to clergymen," she replied, slightly coloring; "of course one could not expect a clergyman to play cards or dance; I meant persons generally."

"Cousin Flora," he said, "I do not believe you appreciate what I am about to say, for you and I look upon this subject from such very different stand-points. I am a professed follower of the Saviour. I desire to imitate his example; to serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; avoiding everything that might bring dis-

credit upon his name. I fully recognize my obligation to do this, for he died to save me, and all the love and service which I can render to him is nothing compared with what he has done for me. It is a rule of my life never willingly to go where my Master would not be received if he were still upon the earth, or to engage in any amusements where it would be considered out of place for me to mention his name to my associates. I must follow His example who pleased not himself—who was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners.”

He paused, but Flora could not respond to such remarks. She had no sympathy with them. He who had aroused such deference and affection in her cousin's heart was to her but as a root out of a dry ground, having no form or comeliness, and in her eye there was no beauty to desire in him.

“And, after all,” he continued, “what trifling matters these earthly pleasures are when compared with the realities of eternity! A few years of very mixed enjoyment here, and then countless ages to be spent in bliss or woe, according to the preparation which we have made for the future.

Did it ever occur to you, Flora, what a very solemn thing it is to live—to occupy a state of probation in which one is to build the solid foundation for future good or evil? And then with this life ends all our plans; in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall lie! Death sets the seal upon every hope so far as we are concerned. ‘There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest.’”

As he finished speaking, Pierrepont arose and turned his face homeward, and, silently and mechanically, Flora followed his example. She was deeply impressed by the last few words that he had spoken. Theoretically, she believed that there were two worlds—one of happiness and the other of misery—but practically she ignored the existence of any such truth. As long as she could remember, death had seemed to her to be a solemn thing, because here all existence ended, so far as earth was concerned, and beyond that line all was utter darkness and the shadow of death. But it had never occurred to her that to live was solemn, and to die was only setting the seal upon the plans and purposes of life; yet now her conscience told her that this was the case. Time

was but a state of probation, and eternity was the real, permanent position of the immortal soul, where all was fixed and unchangeable. If a mistake were made in this world, it could not be rectified in the next; and if misery were to be the portion of the soul, it must be unending, for there could be no looking forward to the future in hope of finding alleviation. It was here that hope ended and despair commenced. She remembered one bright spring morning seeing a poor cripple begging at a corner of one of the city streets. The sight was not new to her; she had witnessed the same scene many times before, but it had never impressed her as it did upon this particular occasion. It might have been that the beautiful morning, with its balmy air and bright sunshine, had softened her heart, and rendered it particularly sensitive to emotions of pity and sympathy. She could not tell; she only knew that she was led to think deeply and sorrowfully on the condition of the young man—a helpless cripple, poor and destitute, for whom there could come no ray of hope from the future to brighten the dreary present. She pictured to herself what her own feelings would be if she

were in his place. No room for hope, all lost in the gloom of despair; and for days and weeks afterward she was haunted by the words "no hope, no hope!" sounding in her ears through the loudest tones of merriment, and thrilling her heart with a painful consciousness of what might be even in this world. But her cousin had led her thoughts still farther on to the point, where despair would be the portion of the lost soul for ever. The poor cripple might not have been utterly bereft of hope after all; for through all the darkness of earth he may have been looking forward to the glorious brightness of heaven, where there should not only be an end of his poverty and suffering, but where he should be happy beyond expression. She could readily understand how the earnest faith of the Christian could lead him to bear pain and trouble uncomplainingly all the years of his life, with the prospect of a blessed eternity in view. But for her there was no such hope. Death must indeed be the end of all enjoyment to her, for earthly pleasures were all that she could understand or appreciate. Yet could she give up all these for the sake of securing that everlasting hope? Was

not the eternal happiness of the soul worthy of such a sacrifice? These were only passing questions, flitting through her mind and remaining unanswered.

The human heart is very deceitful, and it will not often allow the all-important question of the soul's salvation to come up plainly and distinctly before the conscience for deliberation. It has a subtle process, by which the truth is disguised by a tissue of falsehood, of presenting some shadow for the imagination to grasp, while the substance remains untouched. In reality she was called upon to choose between light and darkness, good and evil, God and Mammon. But through this false medium the questions at issue were changed and distorted; light merged into twilight so dim as scarcely to be distinguishable from darkness; good and evil became strangely mingled together; and the requirements of God were made to chime in with those of Mammon, with an adaptation that was perfectly wonderful.

These lines of separation have been very distinctly drawn in the word of God, and the mist that appeared to surround them had its origin in Flora's own sinful imagination. If there was

any deception in the case, she was herself responsible for it. The straight road lay before her in the clear light of day; but she deliberately closed her eyes, and wandered off into the darkness, upon a path of her own choosing.

"Pierrepont may say what he pleases," she reasoned finally; "I do not see what sin there can be in enjoying the rational amusements of the world. To me it seems quite possible to serve God and find pleasure in such things at the same time. *I* shall try, at any rate. I may not perhaps be as strict in my notions as John, or Pierrepont, or Lucy, but if I am only good enough to get to heaven at last, I shall be quite satisfied."

This closing sentence displayed Flora's utter ignorance of the plan of salvation as it is revealed in the Gospel. No one in himself can ever be good enough to go to heaven. All have sinned, and must receive forgiveness and propitiation for sin in one way only—through the blood of the Son of God. We have no merits of our own to plead before the great Judge, and as sinful, human beings we are all guilty before him. If we are ever saved, we will say with the apostle: "Not by works of righteousness which

we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he hath shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

A young man once came running to the Saviour, and earnestly asked him: "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" Jesus reminded him of the requirements of the law as laid down in the Ten Commandments. "And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. And Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up thy cross, and follow me. And he was sad at saying, and went away grieved, for he had great possessions." So far as the outward observance of the law went, he was perhaps right in saying, "All these have I kept from my youth up." But Jesus, who knew the heart, saw that he had not that supreme love to God which would lead him to sacrifice all for his sake, and

he made him to see this by that last plain command, which he was not willing to follow.

Flora, too, lacked one thing necessary to ensure her soul's salvation. If her heart had been filled with true faith and love towards God, she would have been willing to give up all for him, without any foolish attempt at compromise, "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt."

The two cousins had walked silently on for some distance, each indulging in a separate train of reflection, when they met Blanche and Lucy. Here the conversation took a new and general turn and Flora dismissed for a season the serious thoughts which had disturbed her conscience.



CHAPTER XI.

THE INVITATION.

DO tell me, Lucy," Flora asked one morning, "how you Brighton people manage to pass your time during the winter? The summers are lively enough, for then you can live pretty much out of doors, and the visitors make it almost gay. But the winters must be excessively tedious."

"I do not think you are very complimentary to us this morning, Cousin Flora," replied Lucy smiling: "you speak as if all the animation to be found in Brighton came from nature and the visitors. You do not give us credit for any internal resources."

Lucy could smile now at Flora's charges against Brighton, for she knew they were made by a friend.

"Oh, no!" returned Flora playfully; "pray do not accuse me of any such want of appreciation,

or the charge of not being complimentary will be on the other side. If I were to denounce the inhabitants of Brighton as having no inward resources, it would only be proof of my own obtuseness. But then, my dear Lucy, inward resources fail or become stagnant in the course of time, if they are not kept fresh and pure by outward supplies."

"I do not apprehend any immediate cause for stagnation in Brighton," Lucy answered; "our resources are abundantly fed from springs of whose existence you citizens are utterly ignorant."

"Ah, a monopoly I suppose," responded Flora. "But do tell me, seriously and in plain English, how do you find employment for the winter?"

"Seriously, then," replied Lucy, "as far as I am personally concerned, school studies fully occupy my time."

"But what can you do for amusement?" inquired Flora; "you must certainly find it very dull."

"It is never dull to me," Lucy answered. "We have all our church-meetings in winter as in summer."

“Church-meetings!” inwardly ejaculated Flora: “queer specimens of amusement those!”

“And then,” continued Lucy, perfectly unconscious of the astonishment she was exciting, “we have occasional lectures and concerts, and three or four donation parties in the course of the winter.”

“Three or four donation parties!” exclaimed Flora. “How do you make that out? I thought donation parties were only intended for the clergyman; and as you have but one, I cannot see how you manage it. If you give Mr. Lambert three or four, I should think he would have more than his share.”

“We have only one donation party for Mr. Lambert,” responded Lucy, “but then we always have two or three poor families, to each of whom we give one. I wish you could only go with us to these donation parties, Flora; I know you would enjoy them, for we have such delightful times. First of all, the preparations must be made beforehand, and we must arrange it so that we shall not all take the same articles, and this produces quite a pleasant little excitement.”

"Something like the pic-nic party?" suggested Flora.

"Yes, to a certain extent," returned Lucy; "but then the donation parties are better than the pic-nics; because in the pic-nics we only amuse ourselves, while in the donation parties we make others happy and entertain ourselves at the same time."

"And are these all your amusements?" inquired Flora. "Do you have no balls or fancy costume parties?"

Elegant dress and expensive jewelry held a very prominent place in Flora's ideas of happiness.

"We have never had a ball or costume party in Brighton as long as I can remember," Lucy answered; "yet we have very pleasant social gatherings during the winter, such as society meetings, tea-drinkings, and evening parties."

"Whist parties?" suggested Flora.

"What! card parties?" exclaimed Lucy, with a half-frightened look. "Most certainly not. We have never had a card in our house, and I have never seen one at any place where I visit."

"But how do you amuse yourselves without dancing or card-playing?" asked Flora.

"We have conversational powers," replied Lucy, a little proudly, "which, if not cultivated to the highest possible extent, are at least sufficient to enable us to entertain each other agreeably for an hour or so at a time. Then we play sprightly games, such as Twenty Questions, Proverbs, and even Stage-coach, and romping games, which are often very merry and exciting. Then, too, we have reading circles of an evening, and sometimes we get up charades—not after the gay and expensive manner which you have described to me as your city fashion, but impromptu affairs, which are really very amusing. Frank Carter is excellent in charades."

Flora changed color. She had not the least doubt of this, judging from the small specimen which she had seen of his talent as practised upon Blanche upon the afternoon of the pic-nic party. But she said nothing of the kind to Lucy.

"And yet, after all," said Flora, breaking the silence which had ensued, "I must confess that I see no harm in dancing. It always seemed to me to be a perfectly innocent amusement."

"I should not suppose," replied Lucy, "that there could be any harm in the mere movement of the feet. And yet," she added, "there are some forms of dancing which are certainly very objectionable. The waltz, for instance."

"Well, yes," returned Flora, hesitatingly; "I think the round dances are rather objectionable; and yet I know some very refined people who approve of them. Unfortunately, too, some of our most fascinating dances are of this very description, but papa requires us to be particular as to who are our partners."

She paused to contemplate a certain scene which just then presented itself to her recollection. At Niagara, Blanche had waltzed with the very agreeable French gentleman who had obligingly compared her to the Empress Eugenie. Accustomed as she was to such sights, Flora was, herself, shocked by it, and remonstrated; but Blanche excused herself on the score of necessity. She had waltzed publicly with Mr. Bingham, a young married man and an intimate acquaintance. Immediately afterward Mr. Bingham introduced the French gentleman as a partner; and Blanche contended that if she denied him this

favor after he had seen her waltz with another, it would have been taken as a personal affront. Their mother, who was present, said that although the idea of young ladies waltzing with strange gentlemen was extremely repugnant to her, still, under the circumstances, she could not see what else Blanche could have done. A foreigner, holding such different ideas from those which govern us, would most certainly have regarded a refusal as a personal affront. Flora was firmly convinced, however, that had their father been consulted, he would have given a very different decision.

“Then, too, Flora,” said Lucy, breaking the silence, “we are religious people here, and do not profess to look for our chief happiness in the world; and if we were to attempt it, we should certainly be disappointed. I do not mean to say, Flora,” she added, seeing an ominous frown upon her cousin’s face, “that we are naturally any better than others. Our hearts are just as guilty; and if we ever get to heaven, it will not be on account of our own goodness, but because God is very merciful and Jesus died to save us.”

Flora could say nothing in reply to this. They

were approaching the same ground over which Pierrepont had conducted her, and she had no desire to travel it again.

The two girls were seated upon a shady corner of the piazza, ostensibly engaged in sewing, but neither of them had taken many stitches during the conversation. Now their attention was attracted by hearing a vehicle stop before the gate. They instinctively arose to meet the visitor, who proved to be Mrs. Norton, the sister-in-law of Mrs. Edmonds. She was a large, pleasant looking lady, who seemed to be always in the possession of good health and spirits.

"Good morning, young ladies," she said; "I am delighted to find you at home."

After the first greetings were over, Lucy invited her into the parlor, and offered to call her her mother.

"No, thank you, my dear," replied their visitor; "it is very pleasant here, and as I have but a few moments to stay, it would not be worth while to disturb your mother. I called to inquire whether we could have the pleasure of seeing you all at our house on Thursday evening?"

She looked towards both girls for an answer, and they accepted the invitation for themselves and the rest of the family with thanks. She remained but a few moments, and as soon as she had left them Lucy said,

“Now, Cousin Flora, you will have a very good opportunity of seeing what our Brighton parties are.”

“Are there any young people at the Nortons?” inquired Flora.

“Mrs. Norton has but one child,” Lucy answered—“a daughter who is married and living at a distance. They very often have young people staying with them, and both Mr. and Mrs. Norton are so very sprightly and agreeable that we always enjoy their society. They generally spend a few weeks of the summer in traveling, and before leaving home give us a farewell party.”

Blanche was much pleased with the invitation to Mr. Norton's. The gentleman's social position was such that she need never be ashamed to acknowledge the acquaintance before the most aristocratic of her city friends. Then, too, during a short call which she had made upon Mrs. Nor-

ton in company with her aunt, she had observed that the furniture was rather more elegant than that which she had been accustomed to find in the Brighton houses. It was not in the village, correctly speaking, but about a mile and a half distant; and although the building itself was not very remarkable as a specimen of architectural beauty, yet the grounds were handsomely laid out, and a grove of fine old trees gave it such a dignified appearance as served to redeem it even in the eyes of fastidious Blanche.

“Do you know, Flora,” she said while they were dressing for the party, “that I feel quite sure that we are going to have a very pleasant evening? Mr. and Mrs. Norton must be different from the rest of the people here. They have traveled too much, and have seen too much of good society, to retain the humdrum notions prevalent in Brighton. Of course there will be dancing, for no one having had their opportunities could object to that; and I should not wonder if the German were to be the order of the evening. There is nothing like going out into the world to brush off the dust and clear the mind of absurdities. I am so glad that we practised

the German all last winter. I really feared for a while that our labor was thrown away, so far as this summer was concerned; but now I begin to see the truth of what they try to teach us in school—that the work of self-improvement is never lost; that we may find it useful in every situation of life.”

Blanche was in a very good humor. She felt somewhat like a fortunate creditor who is about to receive payment for a debt which he had long regarded as valueless. In a sudden fit of inspiration, proceeding from recollections of the past and hope for the future, she performed a few steps of her favorite dance before the glass.

Flora was not so confident as to the German being the “order of the evening” at Mr. Norton’s. Her proficiency in it was quite equal to that of her sister, and she knew that if the prognostications of the latter were correct, she had a very reasonable prospect of excelling in the eyes of the Brighton community, or at least the portion of it that should be represented at Mrs. Norton’s party. But if they were not, the case would be entirely different. In her education, conversational powers were not particularly cultivated,

except so far as related to a few set phrases of compliment or etiquette. One was scarcely expected to require more than this at an ordinary evening party, where dancing and the supper table usually occupied the whole time. But at Brighton, where social intercourse was conducted upon a widely different plan, she saw little prospect of shining; for herself, however, she did not despair. She had sufficient self-confidence to believe that she would prove at least equal to the occasion, and maintain a respectable position among her companions. Her fears were principally exercised for Blanche, whose stock of common sense and ready wit were about equally small.

Mrs. William Morris was called a very skillful diplomatist by some, and an uncommonly managing woman by others, according to the light in which her acquaintances regarded the peculiar talent she possessed. Flora inherited this part of her mother's disposition, and Blanche was often held back from making herself ridiculous by a silent influence from her sister of whose very existence she was ignorant. But Flora was not cool enough now for the exercise of diplomacy. Remembering the folly which had been so openly

displayed and taken advantage of at the pic-nic, she felt humiliated and angry, and the open war of ridicule seemed to her excited mind to be the only proper mode of reaching the case.

"I think, Blanche," she said, "that you had far better practice a little sensible conversation, which will be always needful to you, than the peculiar turns of the German, which are perfectly familiar to you already."

"Dear me, Flora!" exclaimed Blanche, regarding her sister with an air of surprise, "you grow more and more absurd every day. I certainly know how to talk."

"So does a parrot," retorted Flora.

"What do you mean?" inquired Blanche, growing quite as angry as her sister.

Flora began to see her mistake. Open war was neither the safest nor most expeditious way of bringing Blanche to terms, as it aroused in her a corresponding spirit of combativeness which it would be hard to overcome. A little quiet management would have been much better and easier. Perhaps it was not too late even now to change her tactics. The object to be gained was certainly worth the attempt.

"I will tell you exactly what I mean, Blanche," she said, in a much more moderate tone. "I hardly think that you will have an opportunity to dance the German this evening; but I am sure you will be called upon to take your part in conversation—a talent which neither you nor I have ever been required to cultivate to any great extent."

"Every child can use its own native tongue, which is all that is needed at Brighton," interrupted Blanche.

"I do not know that we shall be able to make up for lost advantages," continued Flora, without heeding the interruption, "but we can at least try. Then, too, we need not make ourselves ridiculous by attempting to teach the Brightonians, who are much better instructed in this particular point than we are."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Blanche once more, surprised beyond measure at this astounding statement.

"I mean exactly what I say," repeated Flora; "the people of this quiet country place have much better conversational powers than either you or I. Now just observe for yourself. We

will leave Pierrepont out of the question, as he is a traveler and a collegian, and take Cousin John, who has never been a hundred miles from Brighton in all his life. Although naturally very reserved and quiet, he has a well-cultivated mind, and can answer any question you may put to him properly and in well-chosen words. He can make himself very interesting, too, for an hour or more at a time. Then, for sprightliness and repartee, I never met with the equal of Helen Edmonds. On the morning of the pic-nic party I happened to be standing near to her and three or four of her friends, and in five minutes I heard more witty and amusing remarks than I should have heard in that many years from our set at home. John is solid without being heavy, and Helen, with a half-dozen or more whom I could name, is sprightly without being flippant. Then, too, they are better educated in other respects than you imagine. Everybody goes to school of course, and languages are a part of the ordinary course of study. They are extensive readers, for they have less to distract the attention here, and they are generally well acquainted with the standard works of prose and poetry. Uncle told

me yesterday that Frank Carter could repeat whole pages from Milton and Shakespeare, and in the best possible manner."

A sly glance at her sister revealed to Flora a flushed and disturbed countenance. Blanche was recalling to memory not only that portion of her conversation with the young gentleman referred to which came under Flora's observation, but much more besides. Her eyes were opening to the unpleasant truth that she had been lured into making herself an object of ridicule before these very people whom she had despised. Flora could read pretty correctly from her face what was passing through her mind, and could perceive that her words had taken effect. She pitied Blanche, and not deeming it necessary to pursue the subject any further, she endeavored to divert her attention to something more agreeable.

"I am very glad that you mean to wear that organdie, Blanche," she said. "It is a remarkably elegant dress, and so very becoming to you. You have more taste in dress than I, but it would not answer for me to attempt to copy you, because what would suit your style would not do for me."

Blanche was completely mollified and restored

to amiability. She knew perfectly well that her taste in dress was very good, but she liked to hear the fact acknowledged by others.

“I am sure, Flora,” she said, good-humoredly, “that I should always be glad to help you in choosing your dresses, and I know mamma would not object to my doing so, as she often refers matters of this sort to me.”



CHAPTER XII.

A BRIGHTON PARTY, AND SOMETHING ABOUT MR. NORTON.

THE rules of Brighton society demanded that the guests at an evening party should not appear later than eight o'clock. Strangers in the place who were favored with invitations sometimes carried out their own ideas of propriety, and did not come in until between nine and ten, thinking in this way to gain the credit of fashionable superiority. But finding that not only their object was lost, but also occasionally a portion of the entertainment, they pretty soon learned to conform to the primitive customs of the place and the expressed wishes of their hospitable entertainers.

Neither Blanche nor Flora approved of such early hours, but they were forced to yield to circumstances; and at about eight o'clock they found themselves in Mr. Norton's parlor, where a large

company were already assembled. Blanche looked around her and tried to calculate upon her prospects for the German. Appearances seemed rather favorable on the whole, for many of the guests were from Osburne, the town where the steamboat had landed. Osburne was a thriving town, altogether different from Brighton. It had large factories; large stores, whose windows were brilliant with the latest importations of fashionable goods; a town hall; four or five handsome churches, representing as many denominations; and, unfortunately, an equal number of taverns, lager beer and billiard saloons. Blanche had heard it spoken of in Brighton as the Sodom of the neighborhood, and notwithstanding her imperfect knowledge of Scripture, she had an idea that Sodom must be a suitable place from which to obtain partners for the German. Besides these, there were several ladies and gentlemen whom she recognized as mere sojourners in Brighton like themselves, and who had a city air about them that promised well for her hopes. For the present, however, conversation was the order of the evening, and she must endeavor to perform her part creditably. Flora stood near, almost afraid to

trust her out of sight, and busily planning how she should manage to prevent the display of any extra amount of affectation or silliness. She was still turning the troublesome question over in her mind when Frank Carter made his appearance. He was the very last person whom she cared to see, and she felt a strong inclination to tell him so. "The fellow must certainly be ubiquitous," she exclaimed, mentally. Verbally, she simply said,

"Good evening, Mr. Carter."

Her manner was hardly cordial, and Blanche, who was still suffering the pangs of mortified vanity, was decidedly cool. But the young gentleman, being endowed with a remarkable degree of self-confident assurance, was in no wise disconcerted at his reception. He chatted on as gaily as if he were an acknowledged favorite and perfectly sure of his powers of pleasing. He spoke in the highest terms of the Morris family (and it is always gratifying to hear one's relations praised, even if one does not altogether approve of them); he remembered that Blanche had cut her finger with a thorn on the day of the pic-nic, and inquired kindly whether it had healed; and

he paid a delicate tribute to Flora's judgment, by asking her opinion upon certain disputed points, and receiving her answer with an air of deference. At first the conversation did not flow very freely on the part of the young ladies; but after a while both were completely melted beneath his genial influence. Pierrepont now came up, and proposed that Flora should accompany him to an adjacent apartment and examine some views of Venice, which he thought remarkably good. Flora was hesitating, when Mr. Carter, instantly suspecting the cause, drew her aside and said in a low, hurried tone—

“You need not fear to trust your sister to my care this evening, Miss Flora. I hope that I have profited by your lesson. My own credit as a gentleman and the good name of Brighton are stronger motives to me than the love of mischief.”

There was an earnestness in his manner which convinced Flora of his sincerity. She expressed her thanks quietly, and conversed pleasantly with him until Blanche had finished a remark she was making to Pierrepont, and he had answered it, and then she went with him to see the Venitian views.

The evening was passing quite agreeably to Flora—and to her sister, too, Flora presumed; for it was not many minutes before she found Mr. Carter at a table near to her, displaying a volume of pictures from Punch to Blanche and Mary Edmonds, very much to the amusement of the young ladies, judging from the very frequent and hearty peals of laughter which met her ear. Mr. and Mrs. Norton were excellent as host and hostess. They possessed the happy faculty of putting all their guests at their ease, and bringing together persons who were suited to each other. Not one of all the company was overlooked, and the humblest received perhaps the largest share of attention.

The supper-table was beautifully spread and abundantly supplied, but there was not one drop of intoxicating liquor visible. Mr. Lambert, by request of Mr. Norton, asked a blessing upon it; a performance that created a great amount of astonishment in the minds of some of those present, which sensation, however, did not serve to diminish their appreciation of the good things before them.

When the supper was over there was music

and conversation again, but still no German. Yet the omission was not now noticed by either Blanche or Flora, for they were eagerly listening to an amusing story with which Mrs. Edmonds was entertaining them. The story ended, there was a momentary lull, and Mr. Norton said something to Lucy and a circle of young people among whom she was standing. A movement was made towards the piano; Lucy played a short prelude and then an accompaniment, to which her companions commenced singing the beautiful evening hymn; "Glory to Thee, my God, this night," and before the first verse was finished nearly all the company had joined with them. To Blanche and a few others, this seemed like a strange ending for an evening party; and yet to the majority of those present it was not only fit and appropriate, but a blessed privilege, to unite thus with their friends in claiming the protection of and acknowledging their dependence upon Him whom they revered and loved as their God and Father.

Mr. Lambert was the first to leave, and in a very few minutes the rest of the company had followed his example. The Morrisises were

at home and in bed before half-past eleven o'clock.

"What very early hours you keep here, Lucy!" said Flora the next morning.

"Do you disapprove of our habit in this respect?" asked Lucy.

"Oh! dear no," replied Flora; "I feel so uncommonly bright this morning that I have been making it a subject of congratulation."

"But if there had been dancing," returned Lucy, "I do not think we could have managed to keep such early hours."

Flora smiled pleasantly, for she understood the allusion.

"I suppose it would be extremely hard," she said, "to be very dissipated in a place where at the parties there is a blessing asked at the supper-table, and the exercises of the evening are closed with a hymn."

"I hope that our Puritanism did not disgust you," Lucy answered, smiling good-humoredly.

"Not at all," responded Flora; "astonishment is the preponderant feeling of my mind. In fact, there has not a day passed since I came to Brighton that I have not found occasion for it. I

think it would be impossible," she continued, "for any person, even the most fastidious, to be disgusted at Mr. Norton's house, he and his wife both understand so well how to entertain. They are attentive without being fussy, and their guests are treated with a kindness that is impartial."

"I am so glad to hear you say this," replied Lucy, with enthusiasm. "The Nortons are among our very best friends, and then they are such very good people. Mr. Norton is constantly doing something to benefit others, notwithstanding his many engagements. He is quite gentlemanly and elegant-looking, we think."

She uttered this sentence hesitatingly, and with an inquiring look towards Flora. It was just possible to her that Flora, with her grand city notions, might differ from her in this opinion.

"He certainly has quite a distinguished look," repeated Flora, assentingly.

"He is gladly welcomed in the very best society at Washington and in other large cities where he has business engagements," Lucy continued; "and I understand that he never hesitates to acknowledge openly his position as a follower of the

Saviour. He is a thorough temperance man, from principle, in accordance with the admonition, 'It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor do anything whereby my brother stumbleth, or is offended or is made weak.' He owns an extensive factory a few miles from his house, and has a large number of workmen employed, and his manner towards the meanest of these is just as kind and gentle as it is to the most influential of his acquaintances. It was principally on account of these factory hands that he was first induced to take such a high stand on the subject of temperance. Many of the men were in the habit of drinking to excess, and others, who did not go quite that far, spent more money than was good for themselves or for their families in liquor; and he felt that he could not urge strict temperance principles upon them, while he indulged himself occasionally in a glass of wine. After a prayerful consideration of the matter he determined first to give up its use entirely, and then use all his influence to induce his men to follow his example; and it is astonishing how very successful he has been.

"I will give you one instance out of many of

the good he accomplished among those of a different class. A young gentleman came to Osburne to act as clerk for a while, with the expectation of eventually settling there in business for himself. His father belonged to one of the old Brighton families, but had gone to New York in his boyhood, where he afterwards became a thriving merchant. This, his eldest son, had been exposed to great temptations at home, and being very easily led into sin, his father had sent him away to get him out of the reach of dangerous companions. But unfortunately he had forgotten that Osburne had its temptations, too, and that the young man needed something more than the mere novelty of a change to preserve him from falling. He had scarcely been in his new home a year when reports of a very bad character began to circulate about him. He had spent his salary and an extra allowance from his father in dissipation, and was deeply in debt. The person with whom he boarded threatened to turn him out and his employer to dismiss him, and his father resolutely refused to send him any more money.

“Mr. Norton heard the sad story on his return

from a business trip, and immediately drove in to the town to invite the young man to spend a week with him. At first the invitation was declined in the most decided manner, but Mr. Norton, nothing daunted, urged and coaxed until at last the poor fellow was induced to yield to persuasion, pack up the articles of clothing he would need, and accompany his friend home. Everybody was astonished, but such was the confidence in Mr. Norton that both the boarding-house keeper and the employer determined to delay proceedings for the present, and see how the visit would terminate. Mr. and Mrs. Norton did all that kindness and wisdom could suggest, but at first their guest was surly, then silent and melancholy; yet before many days had passed he melted entirely beneath the kind influence and opened his heart to them. In despair at the shame and disgrace which threatened him, he had actually meditated committing suicide, and would probably have done so had not Mr. Norton's timely interference prevented."

"And how did it end?" inquired Flora.

"Mr. Norton induced him to give him a correct list of his debts," Lucy continued, "and then

handed him first a check for a sum sufficient to pay his board bill; then two or three others to tradesmen, who he knew were needing the money, leaving only a few small claims for him to settle out of his salary, which would soon be due. This freedom from debt of course removed a large part of the disgrace which rested upon him. He was overwhelmed with gratitude at such unexpected kindness, and gladly signed a paper, acknowledging his indebtedness to his benefactor and promising to repay it as soon as he had the power. Mr. Norton took advantage of this opportunity to remind him of the greater indebtedness which he owed to God as his Creator, Preserver and Redeemer, and his duty to acknowledge this also with humility and thankfulness. He knelt down and prayed with him, and used all his influence to induce him to pray for himself and to resolve from that time forth to turn from sin and follow the Saviour."

"Did he do this?" inquired Flora, hesitatingly.

"Yes, he did," replied Lucy; "and I will tell you how it all turned out. The Nortons extended their invitation indefinitely, and the young man became almost like a son to them. He was a

member of their family for years, and is now not only an active and successful merchant, but an active and successful Christian. The debt, so far as money could do it, was repaid years ago, but the gratitude and love must continue the same as long as he lives."

Flora sat silently engaged in revolving a serious question in her mind. She was recalling the list of her father's friends, and considering how they would each have acted under similar circumstances; and she was forced to the conclusion that not one of them would have assumed the responsibility of receiving a dissipated young man into his house and paying his debts. It was unaccountable to her what could have induced Mr. Norton to pursue such a course.

"I think Mr. Norton behaved beautifully, Lucy," she said presently; "but I cannot imagine why he should have done so much for one who had so little claim upon him."

"Our Saviour came into the world to seek and to save the lost sheep of His flock," returned Lucy, seriously, "and Mr. Norton tries to imitate the example of his Master."

But this explanation did not make the matter

perfectly clear to Flora's comprehension. She could not understand or appreciate the love of Christ which could constrain His friends to do many things which are contrary to nature.

"Lucy!"

The call came distinct and clear, and Lucy arose in answer to it.

"There is mother calling me," she said, "which means that it is nearly dinner-time. It is wonderful how quickly time passes."

Flora was scarcely conscious of her cousin's last remark, for her mind was once more busy with drawing strange comparisons. This time it was between society in the city and at Brighton. The contrast was certainly very striking, but she was mistaken in attributing it to the difference of locality. It had its origin in a far deeper cause. It was the contrast between darkness and light, evil and good, the power of Satan and the power of God—between those who are striving to follow the example of Him who pleased not himself, but cheerfully suffered poverty and even death to save lost sinners, and those whose whole energies are devoted to the one great object of pleasing themselves alone, entirely regardless of

the suffering around them. There were many in the large city who belonged to the former class, but they were not to be found in the fashionable circles where Flora visited; and unhappily, too, there were some in Brighton who belonged to the latter class. It was the grace of God, and this alone, which created the distinction.

Unfortunately, prodigal sons are common to all ages and localities, and very few persons can take many steps upon the journey of life without meeting with one or more of the class. So Flora now could recall one in particular—a young man whom she remembered as a favored visitor in her father's house when she was quite a little girl. Her mother always greeted him with her warmest welcome, and never seemed to consider an entertainment complete without him. He was handsome, agreeable, talented, and very witty, and more than all, in the eyes of the world, as she knew it, he was wealthy. These qualities made him the charm of the social circle. A year or two passed away, and a change was discernible. His face became flushed with a deeper and less agreeable hue than that which health would impart, his features lost their regularity and his

figure its grace, and his dress had a careless and disorderly look. Then she heard whispers of something wrong, followed soon by louder complaints of dissipation, improper behavior at a private ball given by one of the élite of their circle, and heavy losses by gambling; at last the sad crisis came. He was publicly denounced among his acquaintances as having frittered away a handsome fortune, being head over ears in debt, and trying to borrow money wherever he could obtain it. Some one—she could not recollect who, but it was a visitor who dined with them—had suggested that perhaps, now that his money was all gone, he might turn over a new leaf and become a changed man, if a friend would step forward and lend him a helping hand. But both her mother and father opposed the idea in the most decided terms. It would be mistaken benevolence and worse than useless. Reformation in such a case was almost impossible, and it would be folly to trust to so frail a hope. These remarks were followed by a dissertation from her mother upon the weakness of giving way to temptation. In her estimation, the first few steps upon the downward road were neither wrong nor objectionable in themselves.

The evil lay entirely in yielding to the impetus which was sure to carry one rapidly to the abyss at the bottom. It was gentlemanly and proper to drink wine and play cards, but a gentleman should never allow himself to become intoxicated with the wine or lose money with the cards.

It occurred to Flora, even then, that it might be safer never to touch either of the two, but it was merely a passing thought, and so thoroughly opposed to the morals of the society in which she lived that the idea was dismissed as quickly as it had come. Now, however, with the other example before her, it assumed a firmer hold in her mind, and she felt sure that it was right.

But to return to the poor prodigal. The fiat went forth against him. He received no more invitations to entertainments, and the servants were strictly charged to say "not at home" upon all occasions to Mr. Beaumont. He had always been a special favorite of hers, and she well remembered how very sorry she felt for him, and how upon one evening, when she heard his voice at the door, she was strongly tempted to go forward and say something kind and consoling to him. But Blanche held her back by the threat of their

mother's displeasure, and he was allowed to leave unnoticed—a subject of sincere regret to her long afterward. Even now, at this distance, she heaved a sigh of distress that there had been no Mr. Norton among poor Mr. Beaumont's acquaintances, to give him a helping hand and raise him from his degradation. The last news of him was that he had gone to California; at which everybody seemed relieved and none interested to know what his future might be in that last earthly refuge of the prodigal.



CHAPTER XIII.

A RAINY DAY.

IT was a stormy day at Brighton. The rain commenced falling heavily quite early in the morning, and Blanche and Flora were awakened by its noisy patter against their chamber window. It would be utterly impossible to get out of doors all day, from present appearances, and Blanche made dismal lamentations over the gloomy prospect before her. Flora suggested crocheting as an alleviation. This seemed to be the one talent in which her sister excelled, and there was a tidy, which had been commenced before she left home and packed up in the trunk, where it had lain idle ever since, apparently just waiting for this favorable opportunity. Blanche demurred as usual at the suggestion, but followed it to the extent of getting out the article in question and laying it upon the table for further consideration.

After breakfast, Willie—whose loyalty to his cousin John had in no wise diminished on account of his admiration for Pierrepont—pronounced the rain a fortunate circumstance, because it was to be the means of John working in the barn; a prospect which had all the charm of novelty to him. Blanche sighed once more over her brother's tastes. She glanced at his hard, brown hands, and thought of the tightly-fitting kid gloves which were laid aside for him in his drawer at home. Their mother had had hard work to induce him to wear them in the first instance, and now the lesson must all be learned over again.

Lucy went about her ordinary avocations, assisted by Flora, and when these were accomplished the two girls took their work into the sitting-room, where Pierrepont was already waiting to read to them, and where they were very soon joined by Blanche with her crochet work. The article which Pierrepont selected for their entertainment was an amusing account of a journey through the German States, published in one of the popular journals of the day. He had not proceeded very far, however, when he paused to

make a remark suggested by something which he read. Quite a digression ensued here, ending in a lively conversation carried on principally between himself and his sister, but occasionally joined in by Flora; Blanche, as usual, being almost entirely left out, owing to her lack of general information. Flora listened in astonishment to remarks from Lucy which displayed a correct knowledge upon several subjects of which she, herself, was utterly ignorant.

"Cousin Lucy," she exclaimed in a sudden fit of admiration, "I wish I could attend school with you in Brighton for a while! It is astonishing how much more you know than I do!"

Both Lucy and her brother laughed heartily at this exclamation, while Blanche opened her eyes in dismay.

"I am in earnest," repeated Flora; "you have acquired a much larger amount of useful knowledge than I."

"I am sure we can learn every accomplishment at home, and if we do not improve our opportunities, it is our own fault," said Blanche, in the tone of one who is reading a lecture.

"Accomplishments!" responded Flora; "oh!

dear, yes. One can get all the accomplishments, and *deportment* into the bargain, from Madame; but I want something more solid. Bon-bons are very good, yet one does not feel inclined to make an entire dinner off them."

The subject was here dropped for the present; Pierrepont resumed his reading, and the girls their work. But an abiding impression was left upon the mind of Flora. She had caught a glimpse of better things, which, faint as it was, revealed to her a higher state of existence than that to which her ambition had hitherto pointed.

The rain continued, and so did the reading; and thus the morning passed away—pleasantly to three of the party, and rather stupidly to the fourth. The German expedition ended only a few minutes before the dinner-bell commenced, and Pierrepont announced to his audience that with their permission he had something else quite as interesting to read in the afternoon. So it was agreed that they should meet in the same place at four o'clock precisely.

Blanche took her afternoon nap as usual, and awakened within a quarter of an hour of the appointed time. With a gloomy countenance she

went over to the window and looked out upon the dreary prospect before her. Rain! rain! rain! The clouds poured out one unceasing torrent, the only variation being an occasional gust of wind, that sent the heavy branches of the trees swaying back and forth with a moaning sound that was dismal to her ears.

“Oh dear!” she sighed, “this is really distressing!”

“Now, do you know, Blanche,” replied Flora, cheerfully, “that I like the weather to day?”

“Flora Morris,” exclaimed Blanche, “you are the most provoking creature I ever met with in all my life. Your oddity is perfectly unendurable.”

Blanche was wonderfully aroused for her, and there seemed to be a reasonable prospect that her annoyance with the weather would be lost in this newer source of indignation. Flora, on her part, was very much amused at the turn affairs were taking. It did not distress her in the least to be pronounced unendurable by Blanche, for she had become quite accustomed to it.

“Yes,” she repeated, quietly, “I am very fond of rainy days occasionally. The rain seems to

have the same effect upon the atmosphere that a hearty explosion of anger has upon some constitutions. It clears out all the dull, heavy vapors, and brightens up everything splendidly."

Blanche was doubtful whether to consider this remark as personal or not, and before she could make up her mind about it, Flora left the room, announcing that it was four o'clock, and she wanted to be present at the commencement of the reading.

The audience for the afternoon had increased by the addition of two—Mrs. Morris and John. The article which Pierrepont had selected was not very long, and the reading of it did not occupy more than an hour and a half; Blanche not making her appearance until it was nearly finished. Quite an animated conversation ensued, in which Mrs. Morris took a very active part until called away to attend to some domestic duty. Her exit was immediately followed by the entrance of Master Willie. He came in, wet and dripping, from the post-office, with the letters and papers. Blanche instantly moved off to a distance from him, as if suddenly seized with an attack of hydrophobia.

"Do not come one step nearer to me, Willie," she exclaimed, "or I shall get wet."

"Then I suppose you do not care for this?" he replied, holding out a neatly-folded envelope.

She darted eagerly forward, forgetting her dread of his wet clothes in her anxiety to obtain possession of the letter.

"It is from mamma," she said, glancing at the superscription before opening the envelope.

There were several other letters besides this one, and the papers—one for John upon business, one for Lucy from a school-mate who lived in a distant city; and, as usual, three or four for Pierrepont, from that number of his many friends. Willie departed for the kitchen to get his clothes dried at the fire, upon Lucy's suggestion, and Flora opened one of the papers to look at the news. Presently the attention of all was arrested by an exclamation of joy from Blanche:

"Oh, Flora, this is delightful! Mamma writes that the Vestorie Opera Troupe, who have created such a furore in Paris, are coming to New York this winter."

"I am sure I am glad to hear it, for we had

nothing remarkably attractive last winter," replied Flora.

"And what do you think, Flora?" Blanche continued—"Clara Vanderpool is engaged to a Russian count, whom she met last winter in Paris, and mamma says that the family are, if possible, more ridiculously consequential than ever."

"I should think, if the Russian count was worth having, he might have managed to have picked up some one from his own set quite as attractive as Clara Vanderpool," said Flora, indifferently.

"Mamma says the current report at Newport is that he only marries her to build up a ruined fortune, and that Mr. Vanderpool expects to pay several thousands every year in return for his daughter's title of countess. I cannot understand it," Blanche went on; "the Vanderpools, so far as I can see, are no better than we are, yet—"

"They are not as good, so far as *I* can see," interrupted Flora.

"But they took such airs upon them when they went abroad," reasoned Blanche.

"Anybody can take airs," answered Flora, "if they only understand the right way to go about

it. The exhibition does not require any extraordinary amount of genius, nor is it dependent upon high birth or an exalted reputation."

She spoke hurriedly, for she feared that in her folly Blanche might display even more of the envy that was in her heart, and was anxious to end the discussion. But Blanche was perfectly oblivious to any such fear on her own account, and was not to be silenced so easily.

"I do wonder, Flora," she said, "whether we shall be able to induce papa to take us abroad, before we grow to be quite as old as Methuselah?"

Flora was about as uneasy as if she had fallen upon a bed of nettles, and her countenance expressed her feelings. Pierrepont had resumed his letters, and, absorbed in them, took no note of the conversation; but John, so silent yet so observant, came to Flora's rescue.

"Cousin Blanche," he, asked quickly, "did you ever know of any one starting for Europe and then turning back after getting about half-way across the ocean?"

Blanche looked up inquiringly. The question came so suddenly as instantly to arrest her atten-

tion, and now she was trying to understand its exact meaning.

“Did the voyager change his mind? And was the captain of the vessel so very obliging as to change its course to accommodate him?” inquired Flora.

“The change was neither in the voyager nor the captain of the vessel, but in the wind,” replied John.

“Cousin John,” said Flora, very slowly, as if she were taking time to consider the matter, “is it possible that you had a friend among those famous three wise men of Gotham, who went to see in a bowl? From the sudden termination of the story, the mists of uncertainty that were allowed to hang around the voyagers, and the hints concerning the frailty of the conveyance they had chosen, I always imagined that the whole party had gone down into the depths of the sea; but it is barely possible that one of the three may have been rescued by some returning vessel, and restored to the arms of his anxious friends.”

“No, I cannot claim acquaintance with either of the famous three,” he answered; “my friend chose a common and orthodox mode of crossing

the ocean—a staunch, well-built sailing vessel, and belonging to a popular line. He left home full of enthusiasm about what he should see while abroad, and expecting to be absent for a year; but, when about half-way over, a furious storm arose, the vessel was wrecked, and after suffering much pain and anxiety for two or three days, he was finally picked up by a ship returning to Boston.”

Pierrepoint, who had now finished his letters, was here reminded of a funny story in connection with a storm upon the Mediterranean, in which an extremely fussy, little, overdressed French lady held a conspicuous place. In a few moments he had his small audience listening attentively with amused and interested ears; even the selfish Blanche being diverted from her own peculiar sources of disquiet.

The evening passed as pleasantly as the day to Flora. Her uncle was then added to the social circle, but his presence increased rather than diminished the enjoyment; for, notwithstanding his grave solidity of manner, he was abundantly able not only to appreciate but also to take part in lively and cheerful conversation.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE REVIVAL.

THE season was rapidly advancing towards its close. Most of the summer visitors at Brighton had already taken their departure, and Blanche was looking eagerly forward to the time when she, too, should receive a summons to follow their example. During the height of the season the pulpit of the village church had been generally supplied by clergymen who were sojourning in the neighborhood; but now Mr. Lambert once more occupied his accustomed place.

“It really is delightful,” Lucy said, “to get back again into the old routine. For a large portion of the summer I feel almost as if I had been transported into some strange town, but I am always glad to find myself once more in dear old Brighton.”

In listening to this speech Blanche experienced

a feeling of pity, somewhat akin to contempt, towards her simple-minded cousin, whose tastes all ran on such an humble level; but Flora's mind was full of strangely contradictory emotions. One moment she was regretting that she must so soon leave Brighton, grave and sober and stupid as she had at first been inclined to regard it; and the next she was indulging in eager anticipations of the winter's gayety in the city, to which the visit of the Vestorie Troupe would add new zest. Again, when hearing Lucy's interesting descriptions of the quiet enjoyments of Brighton, the thorough teachings of the Academy, and the wonderful talents and virtues of Mr. Hopkins, the principal, she would wish that she, too, might have the advantages of such instructions; and perhaps the very next minute her thoughts would be running upon the brilliant amusements at her own home, and she would feel that nothing could compensate her for the loss of these.

In the mean time she was having an excellent opportunity of becoming acquainted with one of the principal modes of occupying the time during the winter at Brighton—that of attending church meetings. The return of Mr. Lambert to his

own pulpit was marked by a very happy event. The Lord graciously answered the prayers of his people by sending down upon them the precious influences of his Holy Spirit. They fell silently as the dew upon the thirsty soil, and were no less powerful in their effect for good. Life seemed to spring up suddenly from the hard and barren soil; dying blossoms were revived, and drooping buds held up their heads, rejoicing in new strength and beauty. There was no outward show or noisy demonstration. The work was inward, and proceeded quietly but surely, only evincing itself in the subdued tones, the solemn, earnest countenance, the bowed head, and the tearful eye.

Extra evening meetings were held in answer to the apparent demand for them; and, closely following upon these, meetings for inquirers in the pastor's study.

It would be difficult to explain the position which Blanche occupied during this, to her, new and strange state of things. In extensive revivals of religion the influence generally pervades, to a certain extent, the entire community, and so it proved on this occasion. Many were deeply

impressed, and personal religion became a matter of vital importance to them. Life and death were plainly set before them, and they felt obliged to choose between the two. A few very soon yielded to the voice of God speaking through their consciences, and chose the better part; but the larger portion remained long halting between two opinions—afraid to give up religion, yet still clinging tenaciously to the world. There were those who rose up in open opposition to the whole movement, denouncing it as mere excitement that would soon pass away, and sometimes using even harsher terms concerning it. There were not many of these in Brighton, and yet the class was not entirely without its representatives. Another division must still be described—those who were affected in a secondary way; upon whom the light appeared to fall only by reflection, and who only felt from sympathy with those around them. Blanche tried her best to keep entirely aloof from the whole matter, as something beneath her notice, and resolutely refused to attend the extra meetings. Still, she was unable altogether to resist the all-pervading influence, and sometimes Lucy hoped that her heart was really touched. But if

this were the case, the impression must have been slight, and easily removed, for no trace of it appeared upon the surface.

With Flora it was very different; from the very beginning she took a most decided stand. At first she openly opposed the movement, but before long found herself yielding to the silent influence, until at last she was numbered among the deeply anxious; and here she remained, balancing in her mind the great question, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Would the portion of worldly treasures which would probably fall to her share, and which now stood temptingly before her imagination in all their brilliant coloring, suffice to pay for a lost soul? The question was a startling one, but ought to have been easily answered. Strange, that any human mind, gifted by its Creator with the ordinary amount of intelligence, should have required time to ponder over it! And yet how many such, after all, throw away this priceless treasure, involving their eternal welfare, only to secure a few months or years of careless mirth and vain amusement! Having never spoken of her feelings, Flora imagined them to be concealed

within her own breast; but here she was mistaken. Her friends at Brighton were too much interested in her well-being not to observe the change which had taken place, yet they prudently resolved not to appear to notice it at present. She had yielded to the pressure so far as to attend the extra public services, but she had not yet gone to an inquiry meeting.

One day during this period Flora was feeling very solemn from the effects of a most impressive address from Mr. Lambert, to which she had listened upon the previous evening. The text which he had used was, "Flee from the wrath to come;" and all morning the subject had weighed heavily upon her. After dinner, according to her usual custom, she retired to her room with her sister. She expected that Blanche would soon fall asleep, and then she determined to seize the opportunity of reading a few chapters from "The Way of Life," a book which she had heard highly spoken of, and which had lain untouched upon the shelf in their chamber ever since they had taken possession of it. But, for some reason, Blanche appeared to be not only uncommonly wakeful, but also uncommonly loquacious. She

lay tossing about upon the bed, chattering away like a magpie upon the most trifling subjects, until poor Flora felt like stopping her ears to shut out the sound.

“Can it be possible,” she murmured to herself, “that Blanche has been always so silly? and that I have ever been satisfied to listen to such vain talk?”

Hoping that the flow would soon become exhausted, and determined to bear it as patiently as possible, she took up a band which she was embroidering, and tried to fix her attention upon it. But the hope was vain, for, quite regardless of the evident inattention paid to her remarks, Blanche continued on in the same strain, pouring upon Flora’s uneasy brain that unceasing torrent of words which may be likened to a continual dropping. She had now struck upon a topic which seemed to be almost inexhaustible—Mr. La Farge, the French gentleman with whom she had waltzed at Niagara to Flora’s consternation. She rehearsed some of his most complimentary speeches to herself; the Parisian gossip with which he had entertained her; the descriptions of his father’s chateau, and his uncle’s vast estates, to

which he and his brother were sole heirs. The previous winter he had passed in Cuba and New Orleans; but the succeeding one he expected to spend in New York, and this, with the Vestorie Troupe, presented a prospect which was almost too overwhelming for the weak mind of Blanche to bear.

Seeing no immediate hope of relief, and her small stock of patience being quite exhausted, Flora determined at last to take refuge in flight. She took down her garden hat, which hung in the wardrobe, and carefully concealing the book between two magazines, she prepared to carry out her intentions.

"Why, Flora! You certainly are not going out to walk at this time of day?" exclaimed Blanche, with an injured air.

"Yes, I am going out, and do not expect to return for an hour or two," replied Flora, closing the door after her, without waiting for further remonstrance.

She went directly to a secluded arbor in the garden, which she knew would be unoccupied at this hour, and commenced her reading. But it all seemed to be a sealed book to her; an impenetra-

ble veil covered her mind, and she could not perceive its meaning. Still she read on, with a vague idea that in this way she might somehow secure her soul's salvation. An hour and more passed away, and she began to prepare for returning to the house, though feeling that she had not made much progress in the work before her. She had passed through the garden and around upon the front piazza, when she encountered Pierrepont coming from an opposite direction. He stopped instantly and said,

"I have a favor to ask of you, Cousin Flora. Will you not go in to the inquiry meeting this evening?"

Flora hesitated, and just then her Cousin Lucy appeared in the doorway. She was turning away when her brother beckoned to her:

"I want to persuade Cousin Flora to attend Mr. Lambert's meeting to-night; you would go with her, I am sure, if she does not like to go alone."

Lucy gladly promised, and added her entreaties, but Flora still hesitated. Only a few minutes before she had been wishing for this very invitation, and now conscience urged her to accept

it, but pride held her back. She had thought that one word of encouragement would have been sufficient to have ensured the victory to conscience, but pride was more powerful than she had imagined. It would not be driven from the field so easily, and must make one more strong effort. It reminded her of her gay companions at home, and the cutting remarks which would be made upon her if it should ever be heard that she went to an inquiry meeting. And of what use would it be to her to go? There were many professors of religion, doubtless, who never had entered such a place and who never would do so—ladies and gentlemen who seemed to enjoy the world as much as any one; who attended balls and operas; and who, so far as she could see, differed in no respect from herself, except in that one matter of going to the communion table. But her cousins were waiting for her decision.

“No, I cannot go,” she said.

“It may be your last opportunity,” urged Lucy, “and pray do not lose it.”

Flora had resumed the train of thought which had scarcely been interrupted by her answer and its response. The only professors of religion with

whom she was acquainted at home were those who visited at her father's house and who freely mingled with the gay world. What a strange contrast between these and her Brighton friends! One or the other must be wrong. Which was it? She remembered the character of the great Apostle, which had struck her so forcibly as depicted in the first sermon which she had heard in Brighton, and his own words as laid down in the text: "This one thing I do : forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Ah, if Mr. Lambert, and the Apostle Paul were right, then the others must be wrong. Paul and Mr. Lambert acted in accordance with the rules laid down in the Bible, and the others yielded to the direction of their own selfish and worldly inclinations. Her conscience told her that the decision which she was now called upon to make was not merely whether she would consent to appear occasionally, at stated intervals, at the communion table, but whether she were willing to give up the world for Christ; to bring her own will in subjection to his; to take up the cross, and

to follow him through good and evil report. She might attempt to draw agreeable conclusions from the conduct of false or careless professors of religion, but she knew in her own heart what God required of her, and her conscience told her that here her duty lay.

“‘Now is the accepted time,’” urged Pierrepont. “Do not, I entreat you, put this matter off, for you have no promise of to-morrow, and then it may be too late.”

Too late! The sound echoed through her ears like a death-knell. She knew all the chagrin and disappointment of being too late for an appointment or a public conveyance; and once she had seen a man drowned in the dock because assistance came too late. Oh! it was terrible to think of it, even now, when it came to her merely in the form of a recollection. He had fallen overboard from a boat near to the one upon whose deck she was standing. The scene was thrilling and exciting, but nothing more, for help was so very near that she never once doubted the possibility of his being rescued. He could not swim, but he struggled for his life. Ropes were thrown out, but failed to reach him. A boat was

pushed off, but just as it came within grasp he sank under the waves, and was seen no more. Salvation came just too late for him. It was very dreadful, and yet, after all, this might have been only temporal death to him. In her own case it was eternal death from which she was seeking to escape. To be too late for that would be a fearful fate, from which there could be no rescue. These reflections passed swiftly through her mind, for thought is wonderful in its rapidity. They had their effect, however, for when one feels himself to be in real danger, pride occupies a very subordinate position. The most sensitive man in the world, if fleeing from an angry lion, will not be apt to regard the criticisms which may be passed upon his want of dignity or the inelegance of his movements.

“I will go with you if you do not like to go alone,” said Lucy; “and Mr. Lambert is so very kind that I am sure you can never regret it.”

“I will go,” replied Flora.

With this promise she left them and once more sought her own room, where she had barely time to make the necessary changes in her dress when the bell rang for tea.

The services of the evening were very solemn, and the small lecture-room was crowded with an attentive audience. As one upon whom a necessity is laid, Flora fulfilled her promise of remaining for the inquiry meeting. These exercises consisted of a hymn, a prayer, and a few remarks, rather more personal in their application than those which preceded them; and after these opportunity was offered by Mr. Lambert for private conversation with such as desired it. Flora placed herself among the latter. The cry of her heart was, "What shall I do to be saved?" The answer came, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," but it failed to satisfy her. Simply to believe, to throw off the flimsy robe of self-righteousness with which she was striving to cover herself, and submit her sin-stained soul to be cleansed entirely by the blood of Christ, did not at all accord with her preconceived ideas of salvation. So the pastor's advice fell powerless upon the ears. And yet her attendance at the meeting was not without its good effects, nor were the words to which she had listened quite lost. She had taken an important step in the right direction, in placing herself among those who were

seeking for the road that leads to heaven ; and the seeds of truth, although hidden from sight, and scarcely discernible from the hard, cold soil in which they lay, blessed by the God of the harvest, might yet bring forth abundant fruit. The difficulty with which she was called upon to contend was neither new nor uncommon ; and the question and advice which followed were as applicable to her as they had been in days of old to Naaman the Syrian : “ If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it ? How much rather, then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean ? ”

Upon leaving the lecture-room the girls found Pierrepont waiting for them. Frank Carter and Helen Edmonds were among the number of inquirers ; but Frank walked home alone, and Helen with her father, each feeling that there was a propriety in this. Flora and her cousins walked quietly onward for a short distance, and then Flora broke the silence by saying, suddenly and energetically,

“ I have come to one decision, Cousin Pierrepont, which is this : I will never dance again as long as I live.”

"But I thought you did not consider dancing in moderation as having any evil tendency?" he replied.

He could scarcely forbear smiling at the unexpected decision and the very emphatic manner with which it was pronounced.

"Well, perhaps not in *moderation*," she answered; "but then *I* could not practice it in moderation, nor do I believe that this could ever be done by one who is really fond of dancing. At any rate, I cannot see just now how I can possibly be a true and devoted Christian, such as I now desire to be, and at the same time indulge even moderately in dancing, the opera, or theatre."

The last words were spoken earnestly and emphatically as the first, and her cousins rejoiced to hear them, as a proof that Flora was not then attempting to make a fatal compromise between the world and religion.

When we open our hearts to receive them, how quickly will the rays of Divine light dispel the mists which our own evil inclinations have drawn around the line of duty! All the arguments which had once appeared so strong to Flora, and with which she had striven to save her favorite

amusements, now fell from their sandy foundations, leveled to the earth by one touch of Divine truth.

Pierrepoint followed up her last remark by a few earnest and impressive words, urging her to pray to God, who only could enlighten her and grant this desire of her heart. They had now reached the house, and Flora immediately retired to her own room, where she was not sorry to find Blanche fast asleep in bed.


This was a most important night to Flora. It was chiefly spent in prayer and contemplation of the remarks which she had heard during the evening, for she scarcely closed her eyes in sleep. God kindly gave her the light which she needed. She did not feel then that she had been converted, nor did she inquire of herself whether this were so or not. She only knew that she had come to the determination to serve the Lord, even though it should lead her to forsaking all that she loved. Nor did she waver in this determination as the days passed on ; but she doubted her own strength, which a return to former scenes of gayety would put to so early and severe a test. "Oh ! that I could only remain, and go to school at Brighton

for this one winter !” was so often repeated to herself and talked over to Lucy, that what at first had been the promptings of a vague and sudden impulse, began to assume such an attractive and probable form that she determined to make the request in a letter to her mother. She did this very cautiously, from prudential motives, making no allusion to the great change which she had experienced. Blanche, of course, could not remain ignorant of this, but Blanche was not very much disturbed by it. Flora had always been incomprehensible to her, and she looked upon it only as another of her singular fancies, which would vanish when they returned to the city, and not worth talking about.



CHAPTER XV.

FLORA'S LETTER, AND ITS RESULT.

RS. WILLIAM MORRIS was seated in a parlor of one of the largest hotels of Saratoga one morning, conversing with Mrs. Adger, a lady from Boston. She had only returned to the Springs on the previous afternoon from a Western trip to Niagara, and expected to remain there for about a week or two longer, which would end her summer's tour. The morning's mail was about being distributed, and the ladies were looking for letters. They were not disappointed, for presently Mr. Morris advanced with a parcel in his hand—one for his wife, two for Mrs. Adger, and the remainder for himself. He left them for the gentleman's piazza, where he might read and smoke at the same time, while they hastily opened their letters. Mrs. Adger's have no special interest to us, but Mrs. Morris' was from Flora, and its reception concerns

our story. It consisted of four well-filled pages, and, as is often the case, the most important items were left to the last. She spoke of the really pleasant summer which she had passed, notwithstanding her fears; of the very excellent health which she and her sister and brother had enjoyed, and only hoped their parents had been equally well. This was most gratifying to the reader, for, although a fashionable and faulty mother, Mrs. Morris was not an unloving one, and had more than once felt some qualms of conscience lest she might be enjoying herself at her children's expense. She had tried to satisfy these reproaches with the consideration that it had all been done for their good, but this did not quiet them, for it was not true. It had been taken up as a fortunate after-thought, and selfishness had originated the idea of sending them to Brighton.

Flora then went on to praise her uncle's family, and tried to particularize in doing so, but after expressing the highest admiration of Pierrepont and Lucy, as if there was some special charm resting upon these two, she attempted a description of her uncle, aunt, and Cousin John. Here, too, her superlatives flowed as freely as ever, and

it would have been difficult to find out which had obtained the highest place in her estimation. Feeling in a remarkably good-humor with herself, Mrs. Morris smilingly exclaimed, looking up from her letter:

“This is so exactly like Flora! Her dealings are altogether with the superlative.”

Mrs. Adger had finished her first letter and was replacing it in the envelope.

“I think I prefer such dispositions,” she said; “one is more apt to find good in them than in those who are indifferent to everything but themselves.”

“Flora is certainly not selfish,” Mrs. Morris returned.

She resumed her reading, and presently reached the important point—her daughter's request to be allowed to remain at Brighton for the winter and go to school with Lucy. A second ejaculation was the consequence, but this time it was much more expressive of surprise than amusement. Mrs. Adger's second letter was of a purely business nature, and after a hasty glance, which was sufficient to inform her of its contents, she placed this also in its envelope. And now she looked

inquiringly towards her companion upon hearing her exclamation of astonishment.

“Flora has taken such a singular fancy!” said Mrs. Morris, in explanation; and then she proceeded to tell the story.

Mrs. Adger listened attentively, and with even more interest than the occasion might seem to demand. She had three sons, but no daughters, her only girl having died at the early age of ten years; and as she had none to exhibit in public, she was at perfect liberty to observe and criticise those who had. Her keenness in this respect was considerably sharpened by anxiety for her sons, whose future welfare in life, she knew, must depend very much on the sort of wives they should select. Her mind had been considerably disturbed by this reflection as she looked over the list of young ladies of her acquaintance. In her own youthful days, the very expressive term “fast” was almost universally applied to a certain class of young men; and if here and there a young girl might be made the recipient of the title, she proved a rare exception to the general rule; but now the term seemed to be equally applicable to both sexes. She was very much shocked at this

state of things. A fast young man was bad enough, but a fast young girl far worse. So perhaps, on the whole, her censures to mothers upon their folly in allowing this freedom to their daughters were rather more severe than they would have been had her own children been daughters instead of sons. Still, she had reached a pretty correct conclusion, notwithstanding the process through which it was reached. One who stands upon the brink of the stream, a mere looker-on, can generally judge better of the dangerous effects of a vortex than he who is already in the current.

“I should think your daughter Flora must be an uncommonly sensible girl,” she said, when Mrs. Morris had finished her statement. “By some means she has reached a point of wisdom which is but seldom gained by her elders. It is really distressing to see the sort of young ladies who are being introduced into society now-a-days. The tendency of our fashionable schools seems to be to promote rather than check vanity and extravagance.”

Here Mrs. Adger, launching off upon her favorite topic, grew quite eloquent at the ex-

pense of fashionable mothers and fashionable daughters, until the astonishment with which Mrs. Morris had regarded Flora's request bid fair to be lost in the greater astonishment inspired by Mrs. Adger's remarks. She listened quietly and respectfully, for Mrs. Adger's opinions were very valuable in her eyes, as the lady could boast of wealth, high position, and a spotless family record. Her ancestors had not only come over in the Mayflower, but they had left noble kindred behind them in the Old World, who even yet willingly acknowledged the relationship, not only by letters and social intercourse, but in the more substantial form of legacies.

"But, my dear Mrs. Adger," she reasoned, when the lady had finished her arguments, "there is a certain style of manners that is really necessary to a young lady's advancement in society; and where is this to be obtained?"

"At home, from her mother," replied Mrs. Adger, laconically.

Mrs. Morris winced at this remark. Her own manners were certainly very good, for she had a large amount of tact, and was very apt in acquiring the habits which she admired in others;

but, unfortunately for herself, she could never forget that her early position in life was not what it now was. She thought more of this than was necessary, and the difference was really less in Mrs. Adger's eyes than she imagined. I mention the remembrance of it as a misfortune, because it often led her to overdo the matter, and rush into foolish expenses and fashionable extremes, merely for the sake of endeavoring to hide beneath all this rubbish an humble origin, which was in reality far more respectable than the mode by which she undertook to conceal it.

"Do you mean to say," she inquired, with increased surprise, "that it is of no consequence what sort of a school my daughters attend?"

"Not at all, my dear madam," replied Mrs. Adger; "on the contrary, it is of the highest importance. They should not be sent where they will be transformed into mere dolls with joints and machinery, which at a certain touch may be made to play off to advantage before admiring crowds; but where they will be moulded into sensible, well-informed women, who can fill any position in life properly and with credit to themselves and their teachers. In my opinion, this

last can be accomplished better at some plain, solid school, such as your daughter describes, than most of our fashionable French educational establishments. I know something of Brighton; I passed a few weeks in the place, and I have friends who once lived there; and if I had a daughter, and could consent to have her leave home to be educated, I should not feel the slightest hesitation in sending her there."

The arrival of two ladies from another hotel, callers upon Mrs. Adger, here put an end to the conversation, leaving Mrs. Morris to ponder upon it at her leisure. The argument brought to bear upon the subject was very weighty, not only in itself, but in the source from which it came; yet she was not convinced by it. She still clung fondly to the prevailing opinion, and could not give up the plan which she had adopted of giving her daughters a fashionable education. This was not yet quite accomplished, but so far as it had advanced, she had been somewhat disappointed in the results. She occupied a similar position to that of some unsuccessful artist. Blanche was very impressible, and could be moulded almost at will; but the material in this

instance was not of the finest quality. With Flora it was widely different. Here was the proper stuff, but the difficulty was in the moulding; she would not take the pattern which her mother considered most desirable, and into which she had been trying to form her. Sometimes she would think that she had succeeded, but, just when her hopes were at their very highest, some unexpected development on Flora's part would prove that she was mistaken; and she had well-nigh begun to despair of her. Now, as she remembered these disappointments, she added them to Mrs. Adger's arguments, but all together were insufficient to turn the balance.

Mr. Morris had been very much engrossed with the contents of his own letters, and had satisfied himself with merely inquiring how the children were, and what was the news from Brighton, without asking to see Flora's. His wife did not consult him about the request that it contained, because his ideas upon the subject of their daughters' education differed very widely from her own. So the all-important question to Flora was laid over to be decided upon some future day.

The following morning Mrs. Morris was in her own room, busily engaged in making some alterations upon the trimming of a dress which she expected to wear at dinner, when her husband entered. She looked up hastily from her work, and saw from his disturbed countenance that something unusual had occurred. He did not wait for the question which her lips were forming, but producing a small slip of paper from his vest pocket, said, quickly :

“Here, Maria, is a telegram which I have just received from Marks, calling for my immediate presence at home.”

“What in the world is the matter with Marks?” she asked, pettishly.

“Marks” was Mr. Morris’ head clerk and chief manager of the business during his absence. Mrs. Morris thought that he had had the presumption to get sick at a most inappropriate time, and it annoyed her exceedingly; for the unexpected return home threatened sadly to disarrange all her household plans. She was quite satisfied that Marks should be prime minister in her husband’s office, always provided that this in no way inter-

ferred with the home province, which belonged to herself alone.

"The difficulty is not with Marks," Mr. Morris replied, "or it might be easily settled. But a firm in which we are deeply involved has stopped payment, and I fear we must suffer in consequence. I have been prepared for something of the kind, but the reality is far worse than my anticipations."

She turned upon him a startled look, not knowing but this might mean ruin to the thriving business which was supplying them with abundant means for all the luxuries of life, which were everything to her.

"It is too late," he continued, "for me to catch the train from Albany, but I can go down in the night-boat, and reach New York in time for the morning's business. You had better pack what things I shall need in my valise immediately.

"But you cannot stay in the empty house," she remonstrated; "and I wrote only yesterday to Jane about getting it cleaned, and trying to find me a new set of servants. I can rely positively upon Jane, you know."

“My sudden return to the city,” he replied, “need not interfere in the least with your arrangements. You had better remain here for the present and carry out your original plans; I can stop at the Brevoort until they are completed, and shall be ready to receive you all when you come home.”

He spoke mildly and calmly, all the while packing up various little toilet articles in his dressing-case; and his wife looked over his linen to select what might may be needed. The behavior of both was in very great contrast to what it had been upon the first occasion when they were introduced to our notice. Then Mr. Morris' mind was clouded by gloomy anticipations. He thought he could perceive the evil advancing, but he could do nothing to prevent it, and must be satisfied simply to hide his fears in his own bosom and fold his hands in idleness. This was about the hardest task that could have been imposed upon one of his active disposition, and one which chafed him continually. Now, however, when it had really come upon him, he could both talk and act, and with this relief to his spirits he

could throw off all restraint, and nerve himself to meet it like a man. His wife, too, was bearing it with far greater equanimity than she had done petty troubles, which were scarcely worth the name.

Just so it often happens. There is something elevating in great trials, which strengthens us to submit to them, while we succumb to the trifling every-day cares of life as if we were really incapable of resistance. Only yesterday the husband and wife had held quite an altercation upon the very small matter of an afternoon's drive, yet now they were prepared to act amicably in an affair which was fraught with far more of difficulty and annoyance to both.

"I hope that I shall be able," Mr. Morris said, after a short silence, "to keep my head above water; but for this winter, Maria, we shall be obliged to use the strictest economy, and under the most difficult circumstances, too, for it will not do to appear to change our style of living very materially."

Here Mrs. Morris breathed more freely. She did not mind the sacrifices which she must make so much as she did the criticisms of the world.

If the world could be kept ignorant of it, she thought she might bear all the rest.

"The matter of the carriage has settled itself," he went on to say, "for all our friends know that I have sold our horses, with the hope of getting better ones. These are always difficult to procure, and I mean to be very hard to please. The household expenditures I must trust entirely to your guidance."

Economy was not an agreeable word to Mrs. Morris, but she was fruitful in resources, and quite equal to the emergency, with that dreadful bugbear, the opinion of the world, taken out of the way.

"I can easily manage with one servant less, which will make some reduction," she said, almost cheerfully; "but the children's education unfortunately is just now very expensive; and—" here she hesitated, as the recollection of Flora's request suddenly occurred to her, and then presently continued:

"That reminds me, my dear, of something in Flora's letter of yesterday, about which I intended to consult you. She is very anxious to be allowed to remain at Brighton next

winter, for the purpose of attending school with Lucy."

Mr. Morris had one hand upon the lid of the dressing-box and the other on the key, but he paused before turning it to look up in astonishment. His own affairs, important as they were, were forgotten for a moment in the surprise occasioned by this intelligence.

"Are you quite sure that she is in earnest?" he asked.

She handed him the letter, designating the proper place with her finger, and saying,

"There, you can read it for yourself."

"Well, I am sure I do not see that we can do better than consent," he said, as he returned the letter. "She certainly seems very happy there, and I feel sure that the academy must be under the very best direction, for Lucy would do credit to any institution. You may miss Flora, but then you will have Blanche, and you will know that Flora is contented and in good hands."

He made no allusion to missing her himself, for Mr. Morris, like many other men of business, was so entirely engrossed with out-door cares as to make the absence of one member of the home

circle a matter of less importance to him than it ought to have been. For himself, he was far more than satisfied with the prospect. He had been impressed at times with the notion that there were other acquirements than those taught at school, which his daughters ought to learn to qualify them to be really useful and estimable women. His ideas were rather vague with regard to this something, but he supposed it might be to darn stockings, bake a loaf of bread, or sweep a room; yet as the acquisition of such knowledge might interfere with the province of the seamstress, cook, or chambermaid, he saw no reasonable prospect of accomplishing it at home, and did not like to suggest it to his wife. Now, however, his uneasiness might end, so far as Flora was concerned. His sister-in-law was the very best person to attend to this, and the number of servants could prove no obstacle at Brighton. He would have one daughter, at least, thoroughly instructed in all the duties pertaining to woman's sphere, and the idea was very pleasant to him. Then, too, Flora's expenses would be lessened considerably by this arrangement—a very important consideration under the circumstances. If

his business difficulties should produce no worse change than this one, he might hail it as a blessing in disguise.

Mrs. Morris was gratified, too, but for other reasons than those which influenced her husband. She was glad of an opportunity to please Mrs. Adger (whose good opinion she valued highly) at so cheap a rate; and in anticipating the satisfaction she would have in informing that lady that she had concluded to take her advice, she forgot for a time the unfortunate motive which compelled her to do so.

The key was turned in the dressing-case, the valise was packed, and conversation still flowed freely between the husband and wife. They talked over domestic matters—how soon it would be possible to have their house made ready for occupation; the probable time when Mrs. Morris should leave the Springs; when their children should be sent for; and about Flora's return to Brighton. It was only considered proper that Mrs. Morris should write first to her sister-in-law, inquiring whether the plan would be agreeable to her, before giving a decided answer to Flora. Yet this was regarded as a mere matter of form,

as from the manner in which Flora wrote it was easy to see that the family were not only aware of her intention, but equally anxious that her request should be granted.

When these household affairs were all settled, they spoke of other things, in which they had no very deep personal interest, until Mr. Morris was quite astonished at himself. He could not have believed it possible for him to be conversing in this easy manner under such untoward circumstances. Yet this is not unfrequently the case, and may serve as an illustration of the goodness of God, who is kind even to the unthankful in giving him strength to bear the burden which has been laid upon him.

A servant now came to the door to announce that the early dinner was ready, and he went down stairs to eat, hastily, merely enough to satisfy the demands of nature. His wife accompanied him to the table, and when the meal was over waited upon the piazza until she saw him seated in the omnibus which would convey him to the depot. Then she turned away, and sought her own room once more to dress for the usual table d'hôte, and arrange at the same time, to her

own satisfaction, how she should best meet the inquiries which would probably be made concerning her husband's sudden return to the city.

And now alone, left entirely to her own reflections, with the excitement consequent upon first hearing the news passing away, Mrs. Morris began to realize the true state of things. She would not allow herself to believe for one moment that Mr. Morris' expectation of being "able to keep his head above water" could possibly be disappointed; but still she must economize, and the idea was suggestive of many little domestic annoyances. Economy to her meant the making over of old dresses, in the vain effort to make them look as good as new; the giving of no large parties, and even occasionally being obliged to refuse invitations from others, simply because, like Flora McFlimsey, one has "nothing to wear." The real excuse not being of such a nature as to make it available for the public, it would be necessary to manufacture a suitable one, which was an extremely difficult matter sometimes; but this must be done for economy's sake. The prospect certainly looked very gloomy to her now as she leisurely surveyed it, and her anticipa-

tions for the future sank under a heavy cloud, The only bright spot which met her eye was Flora's projected stay at Brighton. It had its disadvantages, of course; but these just now were more than counterbalanced by the certainty that it would tend greatly to lessen her expenses for the coming winter.



CHAPTER XVI.

ONCE MORE AT HOME.

IN due time Flora received the letter announcing that, as she seemed so anxious to go to school at Brighton, she had full permission to try the experiment for the winter. Blanche could scarcely believe that either her mother or sister was in earnest, and when the conviction was forced upon her, I regret to say that the prospect of separation from Flora was by no means distasteful to her. She was fully aware of the fact of Flora's mental superiority, notwithstanding that the advantage of years was on her own side, and she chafed under the strong influence which was too often exerted to restrain her folly. It was really a matter of rejoicing to her that this was about being removed, and she left at liberty to follow her own inclination.

The day fixed for leaving Brighton at length arrived. Blanche was delighted at the thought

of indulging once more in the gayeties of her city home, and Flora was happy in the hope of returning again to her uncle's family at the end of a few weeks. Willie professed himself to be perfectly miserable at first; but a kind and cordial invitation for the next summer, which he instantly and unconditionally accepted, comforted him with bright anticipations and turned the current of his feelings completely.

We will pass lightly over the short time that was necessary to prepare Flora's outfit for a winter in Brighton. Mrs. Morris was very busily engaged in attending to this and other matters consequent upon her return to her home after so long an absence; yet she was not too much occupied to observe a change in Flora. She found her more amiable than usual, and noticed that she attended the afternoon service of the church as well as the morning—a most uncommon practice in the family. She was inclined to attribute this to ill-health, but the ruddy glow upon the cheek, the cheerful countenance, and unfailing energy put an end to the idea at once. Then she considered it as a Brighton peculiarity which had attached itself to her just now, but

which would leave her as soon as she was again permanently at home; and as no reasonable objection could be made to it, she concluded to let it pass unnoticed.

Flora was much moved with regard to Blanche. With her new views of the great importance of personal religion, and with the love of Christ constraining her, she could not bear the idea of separating from this only sister without giving her one word of persuasion to the path of life. Day after day went by, yet still she could not nerve her resolution to the proper point. The last evening of her stay at home came, and she was transferring some small articles of dress from her drawers to the tray of her trunk. She sighed several times, and Blanche, who was in the room at the time, heard her, and looking steadily in her face, saw the disturbed and mournful expression which rested upon it. She could imagine but one reason for this—regret at the choice which she had made; and acting under the impulse of the moment, with an amiable desire to help her, she said, kindly:

“If you have changed your mind, Flora, about going back to Brighton, do not hesitate to

say so, for I am sure there would be no difficulty in your staying at home. Mamma, of course, would be glad of it, and papa could make it all right with Uncle George and Mr. Hopkins."

Flora looked up inquiringly. Not being aware how much of her uneasiness of mind was expressed upon her countenance, she could not imagine by what process Blanche had found out that she had any cause for disturbance. Then, suddenly impressed with the idea that this might be the very best opportunity which she could have for speaking out the feelings of her heart, she said:

"You are mistaken, dear Blanche, in thinking that I do not want to go back to Brighton. I am only distressed upon your account. I cannot bear the thought of leaving you careless and unconcerned about your soul's salvation. Jesus died to secure it, and will you not—"

Here she was suddenly interrupted by Blanche.

"Flora!" she exclaimed, with a decision of manner unusual to her, "if you persist in annoying me with this kind of talk, I shall regard it as a duty to go instantly to mamma and inform her of the ridiculous fancies which those Brigh-

ton people have put into your head; and if I do, she will never suffer you to go back to them."

Flora's eyes instinctively turned towards her sister, and she was astonished at the wonderful change which was visible in her features. Every trace of softness and sympathy was gone, and instead she beheld an angry glare which startled her. She could not imagine how the few earnest words which she had uttered could have sufficed to call forth such feelings, not understanding the deadly enmity which too often exists in the human heart towards sacred things. With an inward prayer for help from that heavenly Source upon which she was learning to depend in every difficulty, she managed to say, calmly:

"I am sorry that I have displeased you, Blanche. I only spoke with a desire to benefit you. When one is seen to be in danger, it is only regarded as kind to give him warning; and if the words in which it is done are not as well chosen as they might be, the good intention is considered as sufficient to excuse that."

"I do not see that I am in any danger," replied Blanche; "and if I were, I am able to take care of myself."

“The very worst dangers,” Flora answered, “are those which we do not see, and from which we cannot save ourselves, but must seek a stronger help. We do not need to trust to our own efforts where the soul is concerned, for Jesus will do all that is needed for us.”

“Not another word of this,” repeated Blanche, with the angry flush still upon her face; “not another word, or I go this very instant to mamma, and tell her all about it.”

Concluding that she could do no good to her sister in her present state, and dreading the consequence of a fulfillment of her threat, Flora returned no answer to the last remark, but ceased her pleadings. The arrangement of the trunk-tray being now completed, she began to prepare for bed, by reading a few verses from a small pocket Bible, the gift of her aunt Mary; and then kneeling down committed herself, her sister, and all who were near and dear to her, with all their varied interests, to the care of Him whom she trusted.


The next morning—Saturday—saw Flora seated in the cars on her way to Brighton, in charge of Mr. Norton, to whose guardianship

even her mother could frame no objection. At the landing she found friends waiting to receive and welcome her, and she felt more like one who is returning home than one who is absent from it. Her school duties commenced on the following Monday, and when these were not engaging her attention, there were other profitable and pleasant occupations to do so. There were sewing-societies, lectures, the singing-school, and social gatherings, in all of which she very soon came to take as deep an interest as Lucy. There were occasions when she missed the gay excitements of her former life, yet she did not grieve after them or regret the part which she had chosen; and if the opportunity of returning to the gay world had been offered her, she would not have accepted it.



CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. GROSVENOR RAYMOND.

RS. WILLIAM MORRIS endeavored to practice faithfully the rules of domestic economy which she had laid down for herself upon first hearing of her husband's business difficulties. As far as practicable, these were strictly confined to the internal arrangements of her household, so that very few of her friends suspected any retrenchment. The number of servants was reduced and Blanche was withdrawn from school; the first change proved to be a great annoyance to the young lady herself, while the latter was extremely satisfactory. Her mother gave it out as her intention that her daughter was to study the higher branches at home, under the care of private teachers. But the private teachers never appeared. They were talked about for a while, and the merits of various candidates were freely dis-

cussed, but gradually the subject was dropped, and Blanche was allowed to follow the bent of her own inclinations, which certainly had not the slightest tendency to study.

Mr. Morris, in the mean time, was very deeply engrossed with business, using all his skill and energy to "*keep his head above water*," and with apparently every probability of succeeding. Every other duty seemed to be forgotten in this one great object. Not one hour did he spare from it for the benefit of his immortal soul; nor did the home circle possess sufficient attraction to draw him away from this one absorbing interest.

Among Mrs. Morris' acquaintances was a Mrs. Grosvenor Raymond, a widow lady in middle life. She was wealthy and of high social connections, but so excessively gay and so free in her manners as to have given occasion for rumors not very creditable to her character. Still, being a handsome and agreeable person, who gave elegant entertainments and visited in the most aristocratic circles, she found a large number of persons ready to excuse her upon the plea that, having lived abroad for several years and having formed her manners after a different standard, she

was not understood on this side of the Atlantic. The difference between herself and those who condemned her was said to be local rather than moral; and what appeared trifling and objectionable in her behavior was pronounced as simply European. Among her warmest defenders was Mrs. Morris, who was in reality rather proud of the acquaintance; and as the lady had latterly taken a violent fancy for Blanche, Blanche was allowed to be with her almost constantly. The principal reason for this fancy was that a young and beautiful face had the power of attracting towards it those upon whom Mrs. Raymond's more mature charms had lost their influence, and whose society she was not yet ready to resign. Then, too, Blanche was pliant and yielding, and capable of being bent at will by Mrs. Raymond, for whom she had a great admiration—a compliment which is always sure to be appreciated.

Mrs. Raymond was enthusiastically fond of theatrical amusements, and would go off into raptures over her favorite performers; and Blanche, whose sluggish nature was delighted with an excitement purchased with so little labor, was only too glad to find her own taste confirmed by these

rhapsodies. Nearly every night the two would be seen in Mrs. Raymond's box at the theatre or opera house; often at a late hour going thence to some private entertainment. But bad as this was, it was not the full extent of the evil. Upon certain afternoons of the week there were matinees held at the opera house, which were entirely approved of by Mrs. Morris, and which, during the previous winter, Blanche and Flora had attended in company with a teacher from their school. But at the same hours there were performances held at the theatre, which she would not upon any account have allowed her daughters to attend. This was principally because of the bad character of a part of the audience, whose presence would have been enough in itself to render the place objectionable. Under cover of the matinees, and her intimacy with Mrs. Raymond, Blanche had become quite a steady visitor at these performances. She would dress and go out, pleading an engagement with her friend; and no further inquiry would be made as to how or where her time was passed. Sometimes she would have a companion as thoughtless and simple as herself; but such was her craving

for these vicious amusements that upon several occasions she even went alone. I do not know how she was enticed there in the first instance, but believe it was through the influence of a morbid curiosity to partake of what she knew to be a prohibited pleasure. Then conscience troubled her, and she felt uncomfortable all the afternoon; but gradually the silent voice ceased to remonstrate, her uneasy feelings subsided, and she began to enjoy the excitement unrestrainedly.

One evening, whilst sitting with Mrs. Raymond in her box at the opera house, she saw her French friend, Mr. La Farge, standing nearly opposite; their eyes met, and he bowed profoundly. He had come in late and was looking for his seat, but, encouraged by the young lady's evident pleasure at seeing him, he instantly turned and made his way towards her.

Mrs. Raymond, who had been looking on, had barely time to inquire who the gentleman was, and receive the answer from Blanche, when he appeared at the door. He was a very handsome man, agreeable in manners and gentlemanly in appearance; and very soon Mrs. Raymond became almost as much fascinated with him as Blanche.

Any doubts which she might have had as to the propriety of allowing this freedom to a stranger had been dispelled upon his entrance, which was immediately followed by that of Mr. Whitney, an old and intimate friend, who appeared to be well acquainted with him, and introduced him to the lady as his friend. Yet, feeling her responsibility to Mr. Morris as the guardian of his daughter, and wishing to be perfectly satisfied before matters should progress any further, she took an early opportunity to question Blanche upon the subject.

"Mr. La Farge is certainly a most agreeable man, Blanche," she said, "but then, my dear, you know it does not do to judge from appearance; and these foreigners are so exceedingly uncertain that one cannot be too particular in inquiring about their references."

"Why, Mrs. Raymond!" exclaimed Blanche, opening her eyes to their fullest extent; "you cannot certainly think there could be anything wrong about Mr. La Farge! He is so very polite and gentlemanly."

"I do not think there can be anything wrong about him," replied Mrs. Raymond; "I only mentioned the fact that one had better be particu-

lar; and now by, way of commencement, where did you first meet him?"

"At Niagara," Blanche answered very promptly; "and he was introduced by Mr. Bingham. We met him, too, at other places afterward, and he was a general favorite everywhere. Mamma liked him very much."

The last short sentence was delivered with marked emphasis, for Blanche very well understood its importance.

This conversation proved very satisfactory to Mrs. Raymond, who was not generally fastidious about credentials if the person who bore them pleased her fancy; but determining to be very particular in this instance on account of Blanche, she held a second consultation about Mr. La Farge. This time it was with Mr. Whitney, who happened to call upon her in the course of the day. In answer to her inquiries, Mr. Whitney said that he knew him through Fred Loring. Fred was well acquainted with him, he believed. He had met him very frequently in Paris, and had in fact returned to the United States in the same steamer with him. Of course he must be a gentleman, for Fred had introduced

him at their club-room, and the members all liked him exceedingly.

Here Mrs. Raymond ended her researches, regarding her purpose as accomplished, and giving herself great credit for having faithfully performed her duty as chaperone. Mr. Whitney did not inform her that Mr. Loring had first met Mr. La Farge in Paris at a café, and frequently afterwards at theatres and public gardens, or some other not very creditable place of amusement. Perhaps he did not know this himself, and was therefore not to blame for withholding the truth; but, however that may be, it remained untold, and Mrs. Raymond made no hesitation in inviting Mr. La Farge to her own house, and in receiving the attentions which he was inclined to pay. Very soon he became the almost constant attendant of the ladies in public; and before long, making himself acquainted with the stolen visits of Blanche to the afternoon theatricals, offered himself as her escort and was accepted.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MISSING.

ONE morning, about six weeks after the first appearance of Mr. La Farge at the opera, Mr. and Mrs. William Morris were seated at the breakfast-table with their son Willie.

“Where is Blanche this morning?” inquired her father.

“She spent yesterday with Mrs. Raymond,” replied Mrs. Morris, “and they were to go some place in the evening, I forget exactly where; but I presume they were detained until a late hour, and that Blanche concluded to return and pass the night with Mrs. Raymond, as she has frequently done before.”

“It seems to me,” Mr. Morris answered, “that Blanche ought to have some duties at home to require the larger portion of her time; but it is more than half of it spent with Mrs. Raymond—a lady for whom I have not the highest respect.”

"You certainly do not credit those absurd rumors about her?" returned Mrs. Morris, with a gesture of impatience.

"I very rarely place dependence upon rumors," he replied, "as I prefer to rely upon my own judgment of my neighbors' characters; and my opinion of the lady is founded upon what I have myself observed. To say the very best of her, she is an excessively gay and worldly-minded woman, and by no means a proper companion for one who is so young and inexperienced as Blanche."

"Blanche is too verdant to know the difference between sense and nonsense," interposed Willie; "and she is the very one to be taken in by any one who will flatter her."

"Come, Willie," said his mother, reprovingly, "we do not require your assistance in this matter."

The entrance of the waiter put an end to the conversation, but not to Mrs. Morris' reflections upon the subject. Her husband's implied reproof and Willie's careless, boyish remark had pierced deeper into her conscience than she would have cared to acknowledge. For the first time the in-

timacy of Blanche with Mrs. Raymond occasioned her uneasiness. There was no doubt that Mrs. Raymond was excessively gay and a complete woman of the world; and although this was no great fault in her eyes, still she could scarcely regard such a character as a proper guide for Blanche. As a mother she did not see the extreme silliness of the young lady as you and I do, my young readers, but she could not help knowing that she was rather deficient in intellectual strength; and she was quite ready to acknowledge openly that she was easily led. Under the influence of these feelings, she was astonished now to think that she had ever been satisfied with this intimacy. She was not willing to admit that Mrs. Raymond's wealth and fashion, and sundry expensive presents bestowed upon Blanche, had closed her eyes to all else but selfish considerations; yet nevertheless this was the simple truth. Her reflections grew more and more uncomfortable as the meal advanced; but she endeavored to quiet them by resolving to drive around to Mrs. Raymond's immediately after breakfast and bring Blanche home with her, and endeavor to keep her there for the rest of the day. It would not

be possible for her to end this acquaintance suddenly, for that would offend Mrs. Raymond, but she would gradually break her away from it. The bitter accusations of conscience and a stern sense of responsibility on the one side, and the dread of displeasing Mrs. Raymond on the other, disturbed her exceedingly; and under the impatient impulse of the moment she actually congratulated herself that Flora, at least, was out of danger, and wished involuntarily that Blanche too was safe in Brighton.

“James,” she said, turning to the waiter who was now removing the breakfast things, “I want you to go immediately to Knight’s and tell him to send me a carriage without any delay, as I have some early calls to make.”

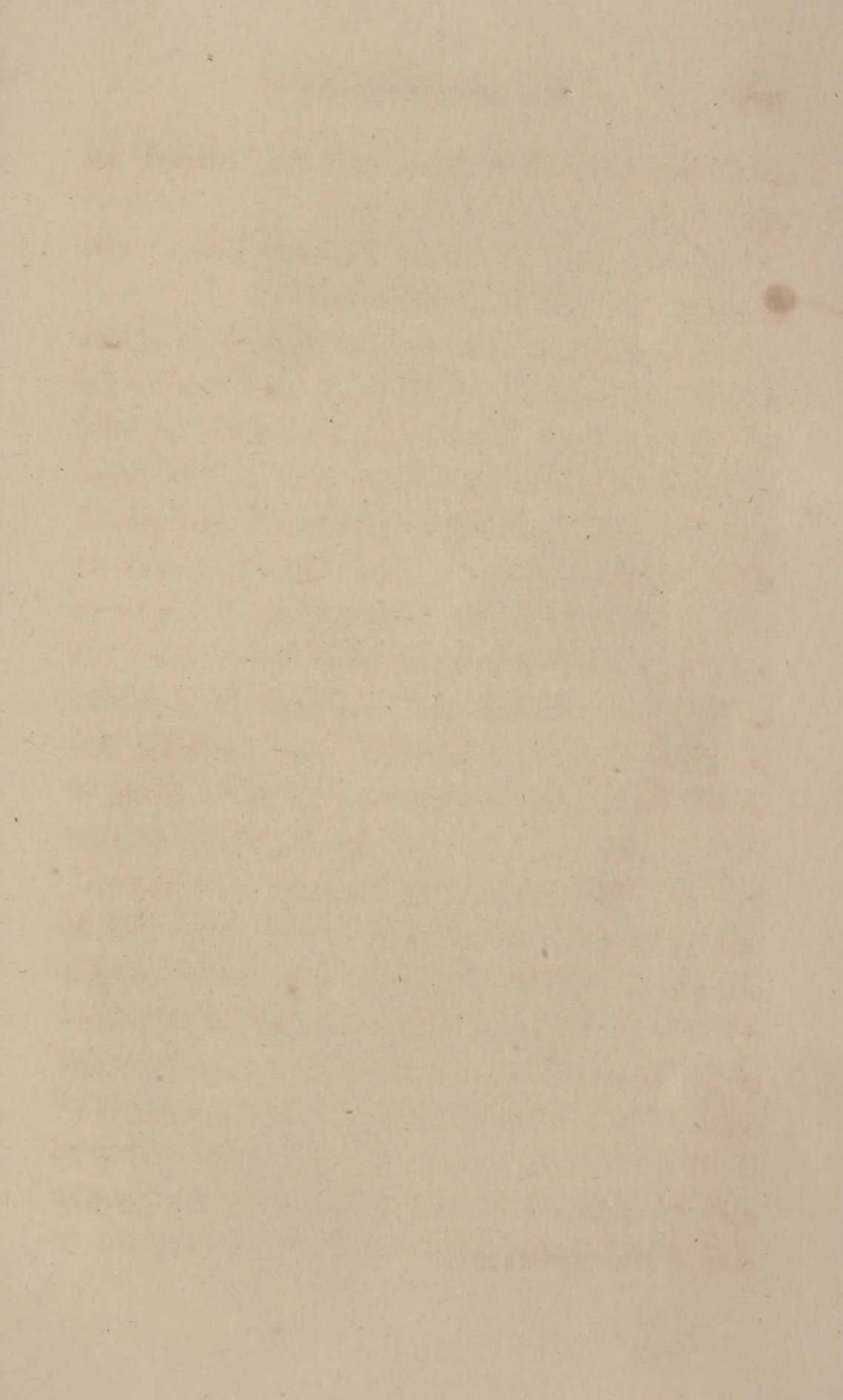
Mr. Morris looked up inquiringly from his paper. The plan of hiring a carriage—although not exactly in accordance with one’s ideas of strict economy—was recommended by the gentleman himself, as far less expensive in the end than owning one; but at the same time he had advised that the livery stable should only be patronized upon very special occasions. And now the freedom with which his wife issued her orders

somewhat astonished him, and he wanted an explanation.

"I am going to bring Blanche home," she answered, and he was quite satisfied.

The carriage was brought to the door in about a half hour, and found her ready and waiting for it. She directed the coachman to drive to Mrs. Raymond's, but as they drew near to her shoemaker's, she suddenly remembered an errand there and desired him to stop. She had ordered two pairs of boots for Blanche, which ought to have been finished three or four days before; but as they had not been sent home, and as the shoemaker was apt to disappoint, she concluded this would be a good opportunity to obtain them, if they should happen to be done, without further trouble. She alighted at the store door, entered, and delivered her message to the young girl in attendance. The girl was not quite certain whether the boots were finished, but would ascertain. For this purpose she looked over the contents of two different boxes, but without success.

"I will inquire of Mr. Fontaine," the girl said, and disappeared behind a screen at the further end of the apartment.





Mrs. Morris at the Shoemaker's.

Flora Morris' Choice.

In a very few moments Mr. Fontaine appeared—a short, wiry-looking individual, very French, very polite, and very affable. He assured madame that the boots had already been received by a member of her family. Madame was incredulous, and monsieur explained. Madame's own daughter, Mademoiselle Blanche, had called on the previous morning in a carriage and received the boots. Mademoiselle had also been good enough to purchase several other pairs, not only for herself, but for her sister, who was absent, and whose foot happened to be the same size as that of Miss Blanche. Monsieur must congratulate madame on having two daughters with such superbly-shaped feet. But madame was at that moment quite beyond the reach of flattery, her vanity being totally eclipsed by her consternation. Monsieur Fontaine must certainly be mistaken. Some designing person had imposed upon him and carried away the shoes. Monsieur could not be mistaken. Mademoiselle Blanche was too elegant to be compared with any one else. Then her foot—he could not possibly be mistaken in that; and she had tried on several pairs of the shoes, to be sure that they would fit.

"Several pairs!" gasped Mrs. Morris.

Yes, for mademoiselle and her sister, who was absent at an academy. Monsieur would show madame the small account, and then she would, without doubt, be entirely satisfied.

He brought forward his book, opened it, and turned to the right place. Mrs. Morris glanced over the page, but had the items been written down in Arabic they would have been quite as intelligible to her as they were in their present form. But Mr. Fontaine was obliging, and read them over very distinctly, notwithstanding his foreign accent; yet his tones reached her ear in a strange confusion of sounds that was perfectly meaningless. A singular sensation oppressed her—a doubt of her own identity; and desirous of arousing herself from the horrible night-mare which seemed to be crushing her, she clenched her hands together until the nails almost cut through her gloves and into the flesh.

"What is the matter with me?" she whispered assuringly to herself; "nothing has happened to occasion this dreadful foreboding. Blanche may have committed some piece of girlish extravagance in buying an extra pair of shoes, and that

is the very worst that can have happened. At any rate, I must listen attentively to what this man has to say."

She raised her eyes and said with calm politeness,

"Will you excuse me, Mr. Fontaine, if I ask you to repeat these items?"

Mr. Fontaine assured her that nothing in the world would afford him greater pleasure. The young lady had done him the extreme honor to purchase two pairs of promenade boots of best material (which madame had ordered), two pairs of fine French cloth boots, two pairs of fancy satin (very elegant for evening wear), two pairs of fine kid slippers, and two pairs of satin slippers (white and pink).

"How is it possible, Mr. Fontaine," exclaimed Mrs. Morris, indignantly, "that you could ever have given so many pairs of shoes to *one* person? You certainly must have known that there was something wrong."

As soon as the words had passed her lips she saw her indiscretion; but just at this time, when she was trying so hard to economize, the expense which her daughter's freak had entailed upon her

caused her, for a moment, to forget everything else.

Mr. Fontaine shrugged his shoulders. There were not so many shoes, as madame would perceive, if she would consider that they were intended for the use of *two* young ladies. Mademoiselle's sister, who was a pupil at a grand seminary, would certainly require them at the soirees and fancy balls; and he could not refuse to sell to Mademoiselle Morris.

In the midst of her confusion and misery Mrs. Morris could scarcely refrain from smiling at the idea of Flora's needing satin boots and shoes at the soirees of the Brighton Academy. But Mr. Fontaine went on in his deprecatory manner, trying to detach himself from all blame, by protesting that there could not possibly be anything wrong with such an exceedingly elegant young lady as Mademoiselle Blanche Morris.

Mrs. Morris had now perfectly recovered her self-possession.

"My daughter has been passing a day or two with an intimate friend," she said, quietly, "and I have not seen her since yesterday morning. I have no doubt that she will be able to give a

satisfactory explanation of this little business matter."

Then bowing a dignified adieu to Mr. Fontaine, who opened the door for her, she left the store and entered the carriage, directing the coachman to drive now, with all possible speed, to Mrs. Raymond's.

Arrived at her destination, she inquired of the servant who answered the bell whether Mrs. Raymond and Miss Blanche were at home. Mrs. Raymond was, but not Miss Blanche. Presuming that Blanche must have left the house only to return to her own home, and waiting to hear nothing further, Mrs. Morris expressed a desire to see Mrs. Raymond. The lady sent for her visitor to go to her dressing-room, as she was preparing for a reception.

"So, after all, I have missed Blanche," exclaimed Mrs. Morris, as soon as the first greetings were over. "It is extremely provoking to me, as I particularly wished to see her."

"Did you expect to find her here?" inquired Mrs. Raymond.

"Certainly," replied her friend, "when she spent yesterday and last night with you."

"Blanche has not been staying with me; I have not seen her for two days," Mrs. Raymond answered.

"Then where can she be?" questioned Mrs. Morris.

"I wish I could tell you, but I do not know myself."

Mrs. Raymond's face wore a startled look as the fact flashed upon her mind that she had not only missed Blanche, but also her constant attendant, Mr. La Farge.

"It is very singular," mused Mrs. Morris, anxiously.

"Very," responded Mrs. Raymond. Then pitying the evident distress of the mother, she added, cheerfully: "Suppose you and I go and look after her. Who knows but we may afford food for a new romance? Not in our searchings for a father, but a daughter, which I am sure would prove far more interesting. And, first, let me ask, by way of commencement, did you drive here?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, allow me to dismiss your man, and we will take my own carriage, which will be

here presently; and then we can move as leisurely as we please."

She pulled the bell without waiting to receive the permission.

"But the reception?" said Mrs. Morris, doubtfully.

"Oh, that is of no consequence. A mere everyday affair, where my presence will never be missed."

Here she paused to give her orders to the servant who had answered her summons, entrusting him, in an aside, with the additional one of bringing up refreshments for her visitor, who looked as if she needed them. It is said that there is no human being living who is entirely destitute of good qualities, and Mrs. Raymond was no exception to this general rule. She was really kind-hearted, and always ready to do her part towards relieving distress when it came in her way.

Mrs. Morris at first resolutely refused to partake of the refreshments which her kind hostess urged upon her; but after considerable persuasion, and a few encouraging words, she was prevailed upon to drink a glass of wine and eat part of a biscuit. She felt as if she could scarcely have

patience to wait for the carriage; and yet when it was announced she wondered in what direction she should tell the man to drive. Upon seeing her perplexity, Mrs. Raymond assumed the whole responsibility, and proved herself fully equal to the occasion. She had heard something of the affair at the shoemaker's from Mrs. Morris, and judging that the young lady might have made other purchases from stores where they were in the habit of dealing, she went immediately to the milliner's. Here, after a little management to avoid exciting suspicion unnecessarily, they ascertained that two bonnets had been bought, and both taken away in the carriage. So it proved at other establishments. The purchases had been large, but all the articles had been carried away by the purchaser, and all placed to the account of her father. But not one clue could they find of her whereabouts, or the purpose which had impelled her to make these extraordinary additions to her wardrobe. Nor did Mrs. Raymond give the least hint of her suspicions to the already despairing mother, who now proposed, as a last resource, calling upon a few of her daughter's most intimate friends.

"Very well," replied Mrs. Raymond; "but you must allow me to make the inquiries, while you remain in the carriage. One glance at your face would be sufficient to create suspicions which would be quite prejudicial to poor Blanche."

"But I cannot help it, and if I could it would not mend the matter. Everybody will hear of it by to-morrow," pleaded the poor lady, who was now so completely unnerved as scarcely to have retained the slightest trace of her former self.

"But, after all, there may be no real cause for uneasiness about Blanche," urged Mrs. Raymond; "and the poor girl may be made the victim of a thousand false and wicked rumors merely through our indiscretion."

Mrs. Morris listened to her reasoning, and was prevailed upon to keep quietly in the background while her friend acted for her. This she did with tact and judgment; but nothing was gained by it, for not one of Blanche's friends had seen her for the last two days.

"Now, I think, we had better drive to your own house, my dear Mrs. Morris," said Mrs. Raymond; "for who knows but the truant may be found safe at home?"

The suggestion was a fortunate one, for upon reaching her home Mrs. Morris found a note waiting for her, which had evidently been directed by Blanche. With trembling fingers she opened the envelope, and read the few lines which conveyed to her the unwelcome intelligence that Blanche had been married on the previous morning to Mr. La Farge.

Mrs. Raymond's efforts at consolation were of no avail now. We will not attempt to describe the anguish and bitter regret of the mother, to which the stern reproaches of the father added poignancy. Like many other men in similar circumstances, Mr. Morris was inclined to throw the entire weight of the blame upon his wife's shoulders. Her burden there was indeed heavy enough, but the responsibility was not hers alone. God had committed the guardianship of the child to the father as well as the mother; and the direction, "Take this child, and bring it up for me," was intended for him as well as for her.

We will here leave the parents to their profound but unavailing regret, and return for a moment to their foolish daughter. Her note informed them that it was written in the cabin of a

boat bound for Cuba, to which she had been taken immediately after the performance of the ceremony; that she would return to the city with her husband in the course of two or three months; and that she sincerely hoped by that time her family would be ready to give him the welcome which he deserved. She did not expect to remain very long with them then, she said, as they would sail for Europe in the spring, and proceed immediately to Paris, where many of Mr. La Farge's friends resided, and in whose neighborhood his father's estates were situated.

Mr. Morris ascertained that the couple had actually embarked for Cuba, after which there seemed to be nothing left for him to do but to wait patiently—the very hardest task that can be given to one whose feelings are constantly urging him to action.



CHAPTER XIX.

THANKSGIVING AT BRIGHTON.

IT was Thanksgiving Day at Brighton. The coming in of the day had been heralded on the previous evening by the celebration of one of the "donation parties" which Lucy had once attempted to describe to Flora. On this occasion it was for the benefit of a widow, who earned a living for herself and four small children by making coarse shirts for a store in Osburne. She was so busily employed with this work as to have but little time left to attend to the wants of her children, and knowing this, the girls had passed many leisure hours in preparing garments for their use. They very often met, together with other young people of the village, for this purpose, and some very delightful evenings were spent in a pleasant and profitable manner.

When everything was ready for the party the widow was apprised of it, that she might be pre-

pared to receive her friend and their gifts. It would be impossible to enumerate all the articles that were given. We will only say that her pantry, cellar, and wardrobe were abundantly supplied, and that several new pieces of furniture were added to her rooms.

Our friend Flora found quite as much enjoyment in this party as she had ever found in the most brilliant assembly in the city. There was plenty of amusements and laughter, which was heartfelt without being boisterous. The Bible had now become a familiar book to Flora, and in looking upon the happy scene before her, she was reminded of the primitive times when God's people were "of one heart and soul; neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things in common." And of Job, when he comforted himself with the thought, "I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy."

But the evening had passed, with all its pleasures and privileges, never to be forgotten by

either the widow or her friends, and a clear, bright sunshine ushered in the Thanksgiving morning. The Morris family arose early, so as to have the needful preparations for dinner made, as far as possible, before church-time. Flora was as busy as any one, and more than once she laughingly wondered to herself what Blanche would say if she could only see her running around in her large check apron. Then she would excuse her own peculiar fancy for house-work by the reflection that after all she could hardly be held responsible for the taste, as it was only an inheritance bequeathed by her ancestors.

The village bells chimed at ten o'clock, calling to the Lord's people, in tones that were strangely distinct, "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; be thankful unto him, and bless his name." Once more the wide streets were thronged with happy worshipers, going up to the house of the Lord in answer to the welcome call. There was more than one family among them whose fresh mourning garb gave indication of the loss of near and dear ones; yet there was true happiness even in the hearts of some of these mourners. The

Christian's faith is wonderful in its power to sustain and comfort the afflicted, and they could say, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in our tribulations." Ah! it is not among the gay and thoughtless that we should look for the really happy and thankful; laughter may proceed from the lips of the wretched, and the feet may be keeping time to merry music while the heart is filled with hatred and envy, and angry repinings against the allotments of Providence.

Mr. Lambert preached a truly eloquent sermon from an appropriate text, and grateful hearts responded to the thanks that he offered to the Lord. When the services were over the members of the congregation, as usual, exchanged greetings, in the course of which the Morrisises considered themselves fortunate in being able to capture several unexpected guests from among a number who, they feared, might not be provided with a good Thanksgiving dinner at home. They had already invited three friends, so that the party who sat down to dine was very large; yet, as all were acquainted and congenial, there was not the

least formality, and the meal passed most pleasantly. There was but one possible cause of regret—the absence of Pierrepont; but as they knew that he had the prospect of spending a pleasant day with a family where he was a great favorite, they could not feel concerned about him. The Edmonds gave a little party in the evening, and our young friends, in anticipation of a delightful evening, grew quite hilarious.

It was nearly dark, and the visitors had all departed, when the mail was brought in. There were papers of the previous morning, but no letters; yet, as Flora had not expected any, she was not disappointed. John lighted the lamp, and handed her the paper; but she refused it, saying that she did not care for the city news, and he opened it himself. Presently he called Flora to him, and directed her attention to a notice of the marriage of Blanche. It was only natural that Flora should be exceedingly astonished and distressed at this news. She knew that Mr. La Farge was not at all the sort of person whom her father would approve as a son-in-law; and if the affair had been rightly conducted, she would previously have heard something of it. She men-

tioned her uneasiness to her aunt and cousins, and they strove to comfort her by urging her to wait quietly until she should hear from home, when perhaps she would find that things were not quite so bad as she imagined. This was the only reasonable course for her to pursue; and yet she found it very hard to keep calm and quiet while in such a state of uncertainty. She would very much have preferred staying at home to fulfilling her engagement at Mr. Edmonds'; but through her aunt's persuasions she went, and endeavored to preserve at least a cheerful appearance, although now thoroughly incapable of enjoying the society of even the most agreeable.

The afternoon mail of the next day brought a few lines from her mother, containing a mere statement of the fact, and bearing evidence that, however deeply she might regret the affair in her own heart, she wished to place it before her Brighton friends in its least objectionable light. It was quite plain that whatever effect this new trouble and mortification had had upon Mrs. Morris, it had not destroyed her pride. She would not have written at all, but waited in hopes of being able to communicate something

favorable of Mr. La Farge, had it not been that she knew the paper would inform them of what they might naturally expect to hear first from her. The truth must come out, and if it should prove as disastrous in the end as her fears had led her to imagine, it would be better to break it gradually.


Notwithstanding the pains taken to conceal it, Flora knew that her mother must be greatly distressed, and she would gladly have gone home to offer her the comfort which she needed, but from the tenor of the note she perceived that this would not be agreeable. Once more her friends were obliged to advise patience, and once more she attempted to practice this hard duty. Letters came to her from home as usual; but nothing definite was said of Blanche, and sometimes her name was entirely omitted. At last one day her cousin John handed her an envelope, post-marked "Havana," which she opened eagerly. It was from Blanche, and was exceedingly characteristic of her, being full of silliness and affectation; yet as there was no indication of unhappiness, Flora felt relieved of a portion of the burden which rested upon her. It contained a glowing, al-

though somewhat vague attempt at describing the various amusements of the place, and the luscious fruits which the climate so abundantly produced ; and some very fulsome praises of Mr. La Farge, for the purpose of showing that she had still no notion of repenting of the choice she had made. There was also a queer, disjointed account of the officers on board of the United States government vessel which was then stationed in the harbor. These gentlemen had paid her some very flattering attentions, which she evidently appreciated at more than their legitimate value. Notwithstanding her anxiety for Blanche, Flora could scarcely keep from smiling at the ridiculous assumption of superiority which pervaded her letter, and the pity which she said she could not help expressing for her poor, dear sister, who was so completely shut out from all pleasures in that dull prison called Brighton.



CHAPTER XX.

DEVELOPMENTS.

R. WILLIAM MORRIS, in the mean time, was busily employing all the time which he could spare from his business in endeavoring to gain the necessary information concerning Mr. La Farge.

In the course of his investigations he ascertained that Blanche had withdrawn five hundred dollars from a savings institution, where he had placed it with a similar sum for Flora. She had experienced no difficulty in doing this, as the money had been deposited in her name and subject to her order.

For the purpose of prosecuting his inquiries concerning Mr. La Farge, Mr. Morris first called upon Mr. Whitney, and was referred by that gentleman to his friend, Fred Loring, who would no doubt be able to tell him everything. Mr. Loring had certainly met Mr. La Farge in Paris and

had introduced him into society, but not as a son-in-law to any of his acquaintances. A man may be a very clever companion for a club or ball-room, who would not be considered a suitable person to marry one's daughter. He might say that he knew little or nothing of Mr. La Farge, his family, or his prospects; but he had no doubt the thing would turn out well after all.

Mr. Morris asked whether he could refer him to any person in Paris whose knowledge on the subject was more extensive than his own. Mr. Loring thought he might, but was not quite certain; and after a little reflection remembered to have met Mr. La Farge in the company of Mr. Giroux of Paris, and to have heard the latter gentleman allude to the family of the former. Mr. Giroux was an extremely gentlemanly fellow and a partner in a large banking-house, and Mr. Loring was ready to supply the address by which a letter would certainly reach him.

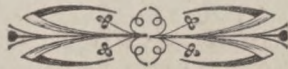
The anxious father wrote immediately to the banker, and in due time a letter was received in answer. Mr. Giroux was excessively polite, and also excessively non-committal; and the information gained was so trifling that Mr. Morris de-

terminated to write to an attaché of the American Embassy. He learned that Mr. La Farge was the son of a small grape-grower, and had an uncle who was a merchant in Paris. After his education was completed, a profession was proposed, but he could find none to suit him. Finally, the uncle agreed to try him as salesman in his large establishment.

But he soon grew tired of the restraints of business, and spent more than half his time lounging in the various places of amusement which the gay city afforded. A sudden impulse seized the uncle. He had thought of sending an agent to the United States. La Farge had an agreeable address and spoke English correctly. His uncle told him that if he was faithful and true to the interests of the business, he would pay his expenses to the United States, and give him a profit upon all the sales he made. The promise was accepted, and the young man was duly despatched to the United States.

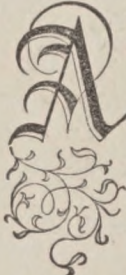
Mr. Morris experienced little difficulty in tracing out the story. The young man very soon changed his mind as to his adaptation for the agency; and having heard that two or three of his countrymen had made fortunes by marrying heiresses, he con-

cluded to adopt a similar course. Mr. Whitney had alluded to a Miss Morris who was heiress to a very handsome fortune, and Mr. La Farge had mistaken Blanche for the heiress. Here, then, was the prize, in the form of a young and pretty girl.



CHAPTER XXI.

AN OLD STORY—THE RESULT OF FOLLY.

BOUT the same time that Blanche wrote to Flora she despatched a similar letter to her mother, to which was added a complaint that no answer had been returned to the note which she had written on board the steamer. This second epistle shared the fate of the first, in having no notice taken of it, and very soon it was followed by a third, burdened with a much deeper complaint of bad treatment. Then Mrs. Morris wrote, upbraiding the foolish girl with her indiscretion and disobedience, and informing her that, for the present, all communication between them must cease.

But it is scarcely worth while to proceed with the story; it was a very common one, and from the very beginning it required no prophet to predict the end. At the end of six months poor Blanche was a deserted wife among strangers. Upon find-

ing that he could not obtain that wealth for which only he had married, Mr. La Farge started for Boston, where he took passage for Europe, selling his wife's watch and jewelry to pay his expenses. He had sailed before she suspected his intention, leaving her alone in the hotel, with the debts which he had contracted.

In her despair she addressed her mother once more, although much more humbly now, and begged to be allowed to return to that home which she had so carelessly abandoned. Her petition was heard. Her father went immediately to her relief, made arrangements to pay the debt to the proprietor of the hotel, and took her home with him.

Upon their arrival they found Flora waiting to receive them, having left Brighton before the close of the school session for this very purpose. This was a real self-denial to her—a much greater one than some might imagine. While driving through the village she looked eagerly about her upon the prospect, so very beautiful in the freshness of the spring-time, and her heart yearned towards it. Her residence in Brighton for the past months had been greatly blessed to her. She

had advanced much farther in her Christian course, her faith had been strengthened, and she would be much better fitted to endure the trials which would surely meet her in her own home.

Ah! what a contrast there was between these two sisters as they now met after the long absence! A blight rested upon Blanche, from whose withering influence it would be almost impossible for her to recover. In the very spring-time of life, the bloom of youth had been destroyed, and no human power could ever restore it. She has sown to the wind and must reap the whirlwind.

Flora's bright countenance was only clouded by the recollection of her sister's misfortune. She had chosen the better part, which can never be taken away from her. Her sister's sad experience cannot be hers while she walks in humble reliance upon the care of her heavenly Father, who will uphold her with His right hand, and who will not suffer her feet to slide. As she is not perfect, she will no doubt find many difficulties in her way. There are the imperfections of her own heart, which heretofore she has allowed, and even encouraged, but which must now be subdued. Some of these the reader will recognize; but she

has other secret sins, which are known only to herself and her Creator. Then, too, she has the world and Satan, the great enemy of mankind; yet if she will take upon herself the whole armor of God, she need not fear the issue of the conflict, for she may be a conqueror, through Him who has loved her and given himself for her.

Blanche complains bitterly of her past troubles and present mortification. Yet her sorrow has not so far been blessed to her. It is not that godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of, inspiring with zeal the performance of duty and earnest endeavors after new obedience. Afflictions become blessings only when they are received humbly as the chastening of the Lord; but when this is not done the evil is increased; "the whole head is sick and the heart faint."

Mrs. Morris now exhibits rather less of that absurd pride which was so troublesome to herself, so unpleasant to her friends, and so ridiculous to others; but whether the feeling has really been subdued, or whether this is merely the natural effect of the severe blow which it has received, remains to be proven.

Here we will leave the Morris family, my dear readers.

This simple narrative will not have been written in vain if it shall be the means of impressing upon one single heart the command of the Lord: "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."







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